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ABSTRACT

In 1997, California became the first state to conduct large-scale experimentation with single gender public education. This longitudinal study examined the impact of single gender academies in six California districts, focusing on equity implications. Data from observations and interviews with educators, policymakers, and students indicated that for most administrators, single gender schooling was a vehicle for meeting at-risk students' needs and not an end in itself. Program success was undermined by implementation challenges. Most single gender academies were, by design, not open to all students. Most parents viewed California's single gender academies as an opportunity for their children to benefit from special resources and to reduce distractions from the opposite sex. Educators ensured that equal resources were offered to both sexes but were less concerned about gender bias. Traditional gender stereotypes were often reinforced in single gender academies. Students received mixed messages about gender from their teachers. Though separating the sexes reduced classroom distractions from the opposite sex, students still experienced teasing and harassment in coeducational spaces of single gender academies. Implementation of single gender academies had positive and negative consequences for students and teachers remaining in counterpart coeducational settings. Public, single gender academies were not sustainable under California's policy framework. (Contains 34 references.) (SM)

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IS SINGLE GENDER SCHOOLING VIABLE IN THE PUBLIC SECTOR?

LESSONS FROM CALIFORNIA'S PILOT PROGRAM

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Final Report

May 20, 2001

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Is Single Gender Schooling Viable in the Public Sector? Lessons from California's Pilot Program

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report examines whether single gender schooling is a viable option in the public sector. Schools and districts throughout the nation are clamoring to adopt reforms to increase academic achievement and satisfy parents and community members. Single gender schooling, a relatively successful model from the private sector, has been considered as one possible remedy. Experiments with single gender schooling are occurring in public school districts across the U.S. Yet, very little systematic research has been conducted on these schools and little is known about their motivations, design, or outcomes with respect to students, teachers, and school systems.

In 1997, California became the first state to experiment with single gender public education on a large scale. Six districts opened single gender academies (both boys and girls) as a result of former California Governor Pete Wilson's legislation and funding for a single gender academies pilot program in the public school system. This report presents findings from a three-year case study of these single gender academies in six districts in California. Our study involved 300+ extensive interviews with educators, policymakers, and students, and school and classroom observations. It is the most comprehensive study of single sex public schooling that has been conducted in the U.S. to date.

The purpose of this study was to assess the consequences of single gender schooling in the public sector. In doing so, we focused on the socio-political context of single gender public schooling in the state of California and in each community; the organization and implementation of single gender schooling in each district; and the policy implications regarding single gender academies as a school choice option. A major goal of our study was to examine the equity implications of single gender public schooling along these various dimensions.

A summary of our major findings follows:

Finding #1: For most administrators, single gender schooling was a vehicle for meeting at-risk students' needs and not an end in itself.

Instead of seeing the single gender academies as primarily an opportunity to address gender inequities for girls or boys (as one might predict), most educators saw the $500,000 state grant as a way to help address the more pressing educational and social problems of low achieving students. With the grant funding, educators developed social and academic support structures to address the needs of their particular student populations, such as low achievement, truancy, poverty, violence, or geographic isolation. To be sure, most of the educators did view the single gender schooling arrangement as a way to decrease distractions among boys and girls to improve students' self-esteem.

Finding #2: The success of California's pilot program was undermined by implementation challenges.

Educators were hampered at the outset by short timelines to propose and begin operation of the academies. They had very little time to think about and plan for the single gender academies, engage the support of constituencies, recruit qualified teachers, and advertise the new schooling option for students. These difficulties were compounded by an absence of legislated funding for state-level support and monitoring of the academies' progress. Once the academies were operational, they continued to suffer from implementation difficulties including staff and leadership turnover, a lack of political support, and funding problems.

Finding #3: Most of the single gender academies were, by design, not open to all students.

The California single-gender academies pilot program legislation was constructed primarily as a vehicle for expanding public school choice, not expressly for goals of gender equity or improving the education of "at risk" students. However, in the end, who enrolled was largely a matter that was determined by the design and target population of each district's single gender academies. In at least four of the six districts, "at-risk" students of color were recruited to join the single-gender academies. White, average, or high achieving students were more likely to freely choose to attend. In some districts, the academies operated under capacity due to insufficient public interest or to difficulties in advertising the choice option.

Finding #4: For most parents, California's single gender academies were seen as an opportunity for their children to benefit from special resources and to reduce distractions from the opposite sex.

Parents were attracted by the extra computers, field trips, small class sizes, and special opportunities offered in many of the academies, and they hoped that distractions among boys and girls would be decreased. Parents rarely mentioned that they chose to attend the single-gender academies because of their interest in empowerment or gender equity for their young boys and girls, except for some parents of white girls in a suburban district.

Finding #5: Educators ensured that equal resources were offered to boys and girls, but were less concerned about gender bias.

Educators were careful to comply with the state legislation and Title IX, which both required equal access to educational opportunity for boys and girls. Most educators presumed that providing these same resources to boys and girls would lead to equal outcomes. However, most educators did not adequately reflect upon the hidden or overt gender biases (to the disadvantage of both boys and girls) that often existed in their organizational, pedagogical, and curricular practices. The California legislation did not provide any guidance in this respect, nor did it provide for state-level professional development in these areas.

Finding #6: Traditional gender stereotypes were often reinforced in the single gender academies. Boys tended to be taught in a more regimented, traditional, and individualistic fashion, and girls in more nurturing, cooperative and open environments.

Educators attended to perceived gender-based needs of students by adjusting their instructional methods accordingly. Because boys were perceived to be talkative and active, they were likely to be taught in traditional classroom environments that were characterized by stricter discipline, a competitive atmosphere, and more physical activities. This compared strikingly to the kinder, gentler environment offered the girls who were viewed as more studious, collaborative, and well-behaved.

Finding #7: The creation of separate academies for boys and girls on the same campus led to a dichotomous understanding of gender, where girls were seen as "good" and boys were seen as "bad."

The legislation mandated that the single gender academies operate on the same campus. Four districts in California operated boys and girls academies as schools-within-a-school and two districts offered self-contained academies on the same site. The physical design of boys' and girls' academies on the same site led to unexpected, and frequent comparisons between boys and girls, often to the dismay of students, who did not enjoy being seen in opposition to, or in competition with, the other sex.

Finding #8: Students received mixed messages about gender from their teachers.

While girls were taught they had broad choices in life, they were also applauded for being feminine and for being concerned about their appearance. Boys were told they should be able to cry but conversely, they were told that they should learn to be strong men and take care of their wives. In most cases, traditional gender role stereotypes were reinforced, and gender was portrayed in an essentialist manner.

Finding #9: The separation of girls and boys did reduce classroom distractions from the opposite sex. However, students still experienced teasing and harassment in the coeducational spaces of the single-gender academies.

Girls appreciated a reprieve from sexual harassment in the classroom, yet they still experienced unwanted comments and touching in coeducational spaces. Students also endured a significant amount of teasing from other students for being enrolled in the academies, being labeled "bad" kids, or "preppy," or, as was most commonly heard, being called gay.

Finding #10: Single-gender arrangements offered opportunities to impart important life messages to adolescents, particularly those who were severely at-risk.

Teachers and students found that the single gender setting allowed opportunities to have candid conversations about life lessons, dealing with issues particular to adolescent boys or girls in each community. When committed, talented and savvy teachers were present, the single gender arrangement provided the space to offer social and moral guidance to students. However, this did not occur in all cases, as not all teachers were comfortable assuming a guidance role with students.

Finding #11: The implementation of single gender academies had positive and negative consequences for the students and educators remaining in counterpart coeducational settings.

In some districts, the single gender academies were an opportunity for students who enrolled, and also a relief to educators in the coed system, as the academies were a place to send students who had not been successful in the mainstream. However, in at least two districts, the implementation of the single gender academies resulted in negative ramifications for the students and educators remaining in coeducation. In these cases, the coed classes were left with either an imbalance in the number of boys or girls, a less motivated group of students who had not opted for the academies, and/or less experienced teachers.

Finding #12: Public, single gender academies were not sustainable under California's policy framework.

After two years of operation, four of the six districts closed their academies, and a fifth district closed their academies after three years. Only one district continues to operate single gender academies. The legislation, the power and politics that surrounded it, and the lack of support for gender-based reform coalesced with competing resource concerns of district and school administrators to structure the demise of the academies. Most district administrators, concerned about improved literacy, high stakes accountability, and Title IX threats, were quick to terminate their support for single-sex schools. School administrators found it difficult to handle the extra responsibility of managing separate single gender schools-within-schools.

INTRODUCTION

Today, perhaps more aggressively than ever before, U.S. public schools are under attack for failing to deliver academic rigor, excellence, and equity, and for contributing to the decline of society's moral values. The critique has escalated continuously since the publication of *A Nation at Risk* (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983), which attacked public schools for its rising tide of mediocrity. Public schools are believed to be deficient in certain respects for all students (Elmore, 1996), and there are wide disparities between income and ethnic groups in educational outcomes (Educational Testing Service, 1994).

A plethora of reform agendas have emerged in response to these calls for improvement. There are movements for nationally driven standards and increased accountability (McNeil, 2000; Murnane, 2000; Nash, 2000), for a common curriculum (Hirsch, 1996), for democratic schools that focus on improving equity (Meier, 2000) and for comprehensive school reform (Slavin, 1998; Stringfield et al., 1997). There are also efforts to expand school choice within the public school system. Fueling the choice movement are conservative social and political arguments regarding the power of the free market to inspire educational innovation, improve achievement, increase accountability, and regain parental support for public schooling (Gerwitz, Ball, & Bowe, 1995). Increased school choice has been pushed through various forms, including magnet schools, charter schools, and voucher programs (Chubb & Moe, 1990; Cookson, 1994; Wells, 1993).

Alongside these reform movements have been concerns on the part of some about gender equity in schooling. A plethora of studies over the past 25 years have documented gender bias against girls in coeducational classrooms (see AAUW, 1992; 1998b for reviews). Girls have historically received less attention and constructive feedback, tend to enroll less often in high-level math and science courses, and face greater threats of sexual harassment in the current school system (Sadker & Sadker, 1994; AAUW, 1993). Though the gaps between boys and girls are closing in terms of academic achievement outcomes in many areas, girls' achievement still lags behind boys in math and science, and most significantly in computer science and technology majors and careers (AAUW, 1998b; 2000). There is also concern that gender equity solutions have reached girls of different ethnic groups unequally. For example, Latinas perform less well than other racial and ethnic groups of girls in several key measures of educational achievement (Ginorio & Huston , 2001).

In recent years, public discourse has centered on a "crisis" for boys. Attention has focused on the lower reading and language test scores and higher rates of special education referrals for boys (Kleinfeld, 1999) as well as boys' greater propensity to be involved in violent crimes (Gilbert & Gilbert, 1998). All boys are seen as at risk, but particularly boys of color. Increasing rates of dropout and higher rates of incarceration are particularly salient for African American boys and men (Leake & Leake, 1992).

Schools and districts in a number of states have responded to these gender equity issues by experimenting with Afrocentric educational programs for boys, single sex classes in math and science for girls, and leadership academies for girls (Pollard, 1998). There have also been recent attempts by Senator Kay Bailey Hutchison (R-Texas) to

pass a Senate bill to allow public school districts to experiment with single gender education (Richards, 2000; Hutchison, 1999).

It is in this reform context that California began the Single Gender Academies pilot program in 1997. The program was intended to increase school choice and expand educational opportunities for boys and girls. This report presents findings from a three-year case study of these single gender academies[1] in six districts in California. Our study involved 300+ extensive interviews with educators, policymakers, and students, and school and classroom observations. It is the most comprehensive study of single sex public schooling that has been conducted in the U.S. to date.

The purpose of this study was to assess the consequences of single gender schooling in the public sector. We focused on the *socio-political context* of single gender public schooling in the state of California and in each community; the *organization and implementation* of single gender schooling in each district; and the *policy implications* regarding single gender academies as a school choice option. A major goal of our study was to examine the equity implications of single gender public schooling along these various dimensions.

We begin this report with an overview of single gender schooling and the research that supports or critiques its merits. We discuss the advent of the single gender public school legislation and its subsequent implementation in California. We describe briefly each of the six school districts that participated in the California single gender public schooling experiment. We illuminate who chose to attend these schools and why. We consider consequences of the organization and implementation of the single gender academies for gender equity, focusing specifically on teachers' ideologies and practices, and students' experiences with gender issues and with distractions and harassment. Finally, we consider the future of single gender schooling in the public sector, situating our findings from the six California single gender academies within a broader context of public single gender-schooling experiments.

This study marks a shift away from prior notions of viewing single gender schools as merely a way in which to organize students. Instead, single gender schools are examined within a framework that embodies institutional and ideological notions of gender. Drawing upon feminist theory, we provide a critique that illuminates how power, which is "both the medium and the expression of wider structural relations and social forms, positions subjects within ideological matrixes of constraint and possibility" (Weiler, 1988, p. ix). Engagement of this critical perspective will allow our audience to understand the way schooling shapes and is shaped by the social construction of gender in historical and contemporary society. In sum, our goal in this report is to expose the complexity of single gender schooling, as well as contribute new insight on how gender operates in policy and practice in education. Concerns for race and gender equity and for the preservation of public education as a democratic institution pervade our analysis.

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[1] The California legislation uses the term "single gender," yet one could argue that "single sex" is a more appropriate term to describe the separation of boys and girls. Typically, the terms "sex" and "gender" refer to the biological and social characteristics, respectively, of being male and female. As Pamela Haag notes, "Schools with all girls are not necessarily single "gender" because they may include students with both "masculine" and "feminine" identities" (AAUW, 1998a, p. 36). However, for the purposes of this report, we use the term "single gender" to maintain consistency with the language of the California experiment, and occasionally use the term "single sex" to refer to prior research.

BACKGROUND AND SUMMARY OF RESEARCH ON SINGLE SEX SCHOOLING

HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF SINGLE SEX SCHOOLING

Until the early 20th century, U.S. schools were sex-segregated due to the belief that girls and boys should be educated to fulfill differential roles as adults. During colonial times, girls' education was relegated to the home, with a focus on domestic skills and religious knowledge. As notions of democracy spread throughout the colonies, opportunities for formal schooling were slowly opened to girls. In the early 1800s, societal attitudes towards women shifted to a belief that the mother was the primary "educator" of her children, the nation's future, and suddenly it became important to educate young women. Schools opened to accommodate the growing interest in girls' education, but often at a cost to the students and their families (Tyack & Hansot, 1990).

In the early 1900s, economic need surpassed any societal convictions, and schools became coeducational in an effort to preserve funds by combining resources (Tyack & Hansot, 1990). The trend toward coeducational "common" schools was also fueled by an ideological drive to create cultural homogeneity through the transmission of common values, particularly in light of the large wave of immigration. Despite the appeal of common schools, there was considerable debate regarding the desirability of coeducation in secondary schools. As public school classrooms increasingly reflected class and ethnic differences, white affluent parents were concerned about protecting their daughters from relationships with boys from different economic and ethnic backgrounds. In spite of these concerns, coeducation continued as the norm for public schools, alongside some single gender schools in the private and parochial sectors (Tyack & Hansot, 1990).

During the Progressive era, coeducational public schools began vocational tracking of boys and girls, in an effort to solve the dropout problem of boys and secure women's place in society through job training. Boys were typically offered woodshop and industrial arts courses. As a complement, girls were offered home economics and secretarial training. Within the structure of coeducation, schools were preparing boys and girls for differing roles in life. Because coeducation was largely an economic decision, not a pedagogical strategy, little attention was given to considerations of how best to provide girls and boys with an equal education. As recent research on gender bias reveals, assumptions about learning styles and abilities based on sex persist in today's schools (AAUW, 1992; Sadker & Sadker, 1994). Indeed, subjects such as physical education, shop, and home economics represent long-held beliefs that education should serve girls and boys' different skills and aspirations.

In 1972, the passing of Title IX sought to end differential treatment of boys and girls in public education. The legislation made vocational tracking by gender illegal and mandated equal opportunity to young men and women in both curricular offerings and athletics. With the passage of Title IX, public coeducation became a vehicle to construct equal opportunities for men and women. More recently, Title IX has been used in legal decisions to force public single sex programs to close or become coed (Hayes & Moses, 1992). Ironically, despite restrictions in the public sector against sex segregation, it is in

the years following the Title IX decision that we have seen a renewed interest in single gender education.

CONTEMPORARY RATIONALES FOR SINGLE SEX EDUCATION

While single gender schools still exist primarily in the private and parochial sectors in the U.S. (Tyack & Hansot, 1990), public schools in at least fifteen states are experimenting with single sex education, most often in the form of separate math or science classes for girls.[2] Other manifestations of public single gender schooling include Afrocentric academies for boys in Detroit, Baltimore, and Milwaukee and academies for girls, most notably, the Young Women's Leadership schools in Harlem and Chicago. The Single Gender Academies legislation in California is the largest example of a state's role in the creation of single gender public schools.

Diane Pollard identifies three goals of these recent efforts, which represent a significant departure from earlier rationales for single sex education: "(1) enhance the academic achievement of girls in specific subjects, (2) support classroom social organization, and (3) provide mechanisms for formal and informal socialization within a specific cultural context" (Pollard, 1998, p. 76). The first goal, to enhance girls' academic achievement, speaks to documentation of gender bias in coed classrooms over the last twenty-five years (Hall & Sandler, 1982; AAUW, 1992). The most common programmatic response to this research has been the establishment of girls-only classes and after-school programs with a math, science, or technology focus.[3] As we will explain, Governor Wilson's push for the California Single Gender Academies grew in part out of a vision to create all-girls schools with a math/science focus.[4]

The desire to "support classroom social organization," including efforts to maintain discipline, is originally heard in historical arguments in favor of coeducation. Early proponents of coed schooling believed that the inclusion of girls in the classroom would help to "refine boys' rough behavior" (Sadker & Sadker, 1994, p. 18). In an interesting shift, proponents of single sex education now argue that the separation of the sexes is the most effective way to manage classroom behavior by eliminating distractions and peer pressures. As we discuss in our findings, in district proposals and in discussions with teachers and administrators, we found that "eliminating distractions" is one of the most frequently cited goals of the California Single Gender Academies. Efforts to reduce distractions had mixed success, however, demonstrating that the separation by sex is just one of many factors influencing social organization of schools.

The third goal of single sex education is to provide mechanisms for socialization, most evident in debates around culturally appropriate learning and teaching styles. In response to gender and race-based inequities, many educators argue for curriculum and pedagogy that address specific needs of particular students. Research on gender in the

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[2] All-girls math and science classes have been documented in Arizona, Ohio, Minnesota, Colorado, Michigan, and New Jersey, among others. It is difficult to fully assess the scale of single sex public schooling, as some public schools choose to operate single sex classes or programs covertly (Streitmatter, 1999).

[3] Examples include the national Girls Inc. and Operation SMART programs, as well as recent efforts to open all-girls schools with a technology focus, including The Young Women's Leadership School, a new charter school in Chicago, and the Girls' Middle School, a private school opened in 1999 in California.

[4] His vision for the boys' academies involved a focus on discipline (see upcoming section).

1980s (Gilligan 1982; Belenky et al., 1986) inspired controversial debates around whether women did indeed learn differently than men and provided justification for all-female schooling. Tidball's (1973) study of the success of graduates of women's colleges fueled assumptions that girls and women needed a separate space to learn. Arguments in support of difference led to what Yates (1993) calls "girl-friendly schooling," with efforts to make traditional curricula reflect girls' interests. The assumption, of course, was that girls had different needs and interests, and schools would have to alter their practices to address those differences. It was here that we saw the beginnings of the renewed interest in single sex education, especially at the university level.

The research on gender in the last decade has provided greater depth in our understanding of girls' and boys' experiences of schooling. Gender bias can no longer be seen as an isolated problem, but is now understood as representative of larger systems of oppression, which include race, class, and sexuality. Reform efforts are more complex than simply eliminating sexist language or curricula, as educators strive to implement alternative pedagogies in an effort to challenge the oppressive power relations inherent in traditional education (Murphy & Gipps, 1996). Gender bias is understood as affecting both girls and boys, as neither group is immune to societal pressures and expectations. In fact, many recent incarnations of single sex education are designed to address concerns around boys' underachievement (Murphy & Ivinson, 2000). All-boys classes are looked upon as ways to improve literacy achievement and discipline for boys (Gilbert & Gilbert, 1998). Strategies of the male academy movement in public schools include the presence of African American role models and a focus on multicultural curricula (Hopkins, 1997).

Clearly, the reasons behind the recent establishment of single sex schools are no longer simple; they represent efforts to address not only gender bias, but also racial and cultural issues as well. For example, questions of how best to serve African-American students have fueled an interest in single sex public schools, often targeting low-income African-American boys (Hopkins, 1997). While most of these schools have since been closed for violation of Title IX, the implications are significant as they expand the purpose of single sex education beyond a gender-specific focus to include broader concerns of diversity and choice in the public school system.

Meanwhile, there has been considerable political and legal debate regarding the value and constitutionality of single gender public schools. All-boys academies in Detroit and Miami have been declared discriminatory and were forced to either become coed or close their doors (Hayes & Moses, 1992). Title IX restrictions have forced many of these academies to open their doors to girls, although girls remain a small percentage of total enrollments.[5] More recently, the Young Women's Leadership School in East Harlem, New York is facing similar challenges. In 1996, two California school programs specifically targeting African-American males and Latina females were forced to change because critics claimed that the built-in gender bias violated federal law. Feminist organizations have voiced concern that single gender schools are a setback in the struggle against "separate but equal" public education.

[5] For example, nearly 90% of students enrolled at Detroit's Academies in 1994 were boys (Grant-Thomas, 1996).

Questions about equality of opportunity, resources, socialization, and stereotyping which can be asked about the move to resegregate schools by race can also be asked when segregating students by sex. The American Association for University Women (AAUW) and the National Organization of Women (NOW) argue that single gender schools are not the answer to gender equity. Rather, they advocate for changing practices in coed public schools to make them more equitable for girls and boys. These organizations argue that the establishment of single sex schools leaves the inequities of the coeducational public schools intact. Furthermore, Hildebrand claims that "single gender schools give the appearance that a school system is "doing something" about gender equity "without [changing] any of the... ways that gender is socially constructed in schools" (AAUW, 1998a, p. 25).

Filling the Gaps in the Research on Single Sex Education

The recent interest in public single sex education is notable, given that the research results provide as many questions as answers concerning the effectiveness of single sex education. Much of the research has employed quantitative approaches, using student outcome measurements (e.g., standardized test scores, grades, career aspirations) to assess its effectiveness as compared to coeducational environments. These quantitative outcomes are undoubtedly important to consider, and the strength of the findings is bolstered by the fact that they draw on large statistical samples, such as the High School and Beyond and the National Educational Longitudinal Study databases (Lee & Bryk, 1986; LePore & Warren, 1997; Riordan, 1990). The qualitative research base on single sex schools is not nearly as large.

Furthermore, in the U.S., studies of single sex schooling have mostly been conducted on private and Catholic schools, as single sex schooling has been very limited in the public sector post-Title IX.[6] This raises important concerns for the validity and relevance of research findings, as Pamela Haag asks, "Do students achieve because of a school's sex composition or because the schools draw from economically and educationally privileged populations?" (AAUW, 1998a, p. 15). Research is often faulted for ignoring the influence of higher socioeconomic backgrounds of single sex students (Harker and Nash, 1997; Marsh, 1989) or confounding gender and class (Carpenter and Hayden, 1987; Finn, 1980; Young and Fraser, 1992). Studies of single sex education have also been critiqued for methodological flaws and lack of generalizability (Mael, 1998; AAUW 1998a).

Another significant gap in the research lies in the lack of attention directed towards the experiences of boys. As Mael (1998, p. 117) notes, "the overwhelming preponderance of research has focused on females and female concerns." While there has been considerable research into the assertion that single sex schooling improves girls' performance in non-traditional subjects like math and science, there is a lack of comparable research in understanding the effects of single sex schooling on boys' performance in non-traditional subjects, such as languages and reading. While single sex schooling for girls is often employed to address bias, single sex boys' schools are

[6] There has been research on public single sex schools in the United Kingdom, Australia, and several other countries (e.g., Rowe, 1988; Willis & Kenway, 1986, Harker, 2000).

typically considered sites of preserved power and sexism (Ruhlman, 1996). Our research is particularly important for its equal focus on girls and boys, and for the fact that it expands the research on boys beyond elite, private schools.

Pollard offers another reason for the lack of definitive conclusions on single sex education. She points out that researchers have failed to consider contextual and programmatic aspects, which complicate our understanding of the field, such as "the disparity in the goals of single sex classes, [and] the variety of ways these classes have been implemented" (Pollard, 1998, p. 81). Researchers have tried to draw conclusions about single sex education as if its implementation and practices were uniform across contexts. As we will explain, in the case of the California Single Gender Academies, for example, the elimination of gender bias is rarely mentioned as a goal of the schools, and thus might not be a useful or relevant measurement of effectiveness, despite common assumptions that single sex environments promote gender equity.

Despite obvious limitations to the generalizability of existing research, it is important to review what has been studied and what conclusions can be made. Several comparative studies of Catholic and coeducational schools show support for single sex education. Neil Riordan's (1985) often-cited study of Catholic schools found academic benefits, measured in achievement test scores, for girls and boys attending single sex schools, as compared with coeducational schools. The girls in single sex schools demonstrated the greatest benefits, outperforming boys and girls in coeducational settings. Lee and Bryk's (1986) analysis of Catholic schools revealed similar results, with both boys and girls in single sex schools outscoring their peers in coeducational schools.

Some research suggests that single gender schools benefit both males and females by providing students the opportunity to interact with same sex peers who are pursuing academic and leadership roles in a stronger academic climate free of distractions (Finn, 1980; Jimenez & Lockheed, 1989; Lee and Byrk, 1986). Others point out that single gender schools particularly benefit boys, highlighting the ways in which single gender schools promote male bonding and optimize male character development (McGough, 1991; Reisman, 1991; Hawley, 1993, Watts, 1994).

More common, however, is the conclusion that single gender schooling offers positive benefits for females more than males (Moore, Piper, & Schaefer, 1993). Comparative studies of single gender schools and coeducational schools suggest that because females have typically been disadvantaged in coeducational settings, they respond favorably in the single gender environment. Girls who attend all girls schools are more apt to adopt leadership roles and to become engaged in traditionally male-dominated subjects like math and science and to show improvements in self-esteem (Cairns, 1990; Lee and Bryk, 1986; Moore, Piper and Schaeffer, 1993; Petruzzella, 1995; Streitmatter, 1999). Some argue that girls succeed in all-female environments, which foster inclusiveness, caring, and values (Bauch, 1989). Some religious groups support single gender schools because they enhance the moral environment for young girls and ameliorate the inequities that persist in coeducational settings (Fisher, cited in Riordan, 1990; Shaikh and Kelly, 1989).

While the aforementioned studies find in favor of single gender schools, other researchers have questioned the advantages offered by single gender schooling (Rowe, 1988; Willis & Kenway, 1986). LePore and Warren (1997) conducted a similar study to Lee and Bryk (1986) and found no substantial advantages for girls or boys in single sex

schools. They surmise that the lack in significant findings may be a result of the changes in Catholic school populations in the decade between the two studies. The conflicting evidence regarding the benefits of single sex schools has led some researchers to suggest that school factors such as small class size and attentive teachers contribute more to positive outcomes than gender segregation (Crawford & MacLeod, 1990; Lee, 1997).

Researchers also argue that single gender educational settings promote stereotypical attitudes towards the opposite sex (AAUW, 1998a; Brutsaert and Bracke, 1994; Foon, 1988; Phillips, 1979) and are generally less happy places (Dale, 1974). In a study of independent schools, Lee, Marks, and Byrd (1994) found significant attitudes of sexism in all-girls and all-boys schools, as compared with coed schools. Similarly, Wendy Kaminer warns of an "insidious" form of sexism in all-female institutions, namely the promotion of "stereotypical notions of femininity" (Kaminer, 1998). In a comparison study of gender role attitudes among students in coeducational and single sex classes, Marsh and Rowe (1996, p. 153) found that boys and girls attitudes reflected gender equality in the coed classes, where they were "forced to confront their preconceptions" of the opposite sex. As our findings will reveal, our own observations of the California Single Gender Academies reveal that the separation of boys and girls may reinforce traditional notions of gender.

Beyond Gender: Issues of Race and Class in Single Sex Education

Much of the research on single sex education has been critiqued for its lack of attention to race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status. Some have logged complaints that assessments of single gender schooling typically confound the variables of gender and class (Carpenter and Hayden, 1987; Finn, 1980; Young and Fraser, 1992), as well as race. They argue that research on single gender schooling must consider pre-existing differences in academic achievement and other student background factors when trying to account for their success (Harker and Nash, 1997; Marsh, 1989). For example, Tidball's (1973) oft-cited study of the success of women's college graduates failed to acknowledge the resources and privilege that accompany a private single sex education (Oates & Williamson, 1978).

Clearly, issues of race and class are salient when attempting to untangle the merits of single gender schooling. Lessons learned from research in coeducational settings show us that students' educational experiences vary by gender within and across ethnic and racial groups (Gandara et al., 2001; Hubbard, 1995, 1999; Weiler, 2000). For example, Grant (1994) found that teachers tended to push African-American girls (more than white girls) toward stereotypical roles of African-American women -- images that stress service and nurturing rather than academics. Low teacher expectations have been shown to disadvantage African American males in public school classrooms (Fordham, 1996), while African American females fare more favorably in comparison (Anderson, 1990; Hubbard, 1999). Similarly, Latino males and females face different social and academic pressures from each other and from their white peers, and these issues vary depending on whether they live in urban or rural locations (Gandara et al., 2001). As Noguera's (1997) research on the crisis facing Black males reminds us, it is important to

acknowledge the larger social, economic, and cultural context in which individuals exist, rather than simply focusing on race and gender as descriptive variables.

Several studies of single gender schooling have in fact addressed race and class (Addleston, 1996; Riordan, 1994; 1998; Weiler, 1988), as more often single gender schools are implemented as a strategy for promoting academic success among students of color (Ascher, 1992; Hales, 1998; Riordan, 1994). Males from low income and minority backgrounds are said to particularly benefit from single gender schools (Tifft, 1990; Whitehead, 1994; Riordan, 1994; Ascher, 1992; Hales, 1998; Hudley, 1995). In his study of single gender Catholic schools, Riordan (1985) explicitly controlled for social class and found that "the consequences were significant for students who are or have been historically or traditionally disadvantaged -- minorities, low and working-class youth and females (so long as the females are not affluent)" (AAUW, 1998a, p. 53). Riordan's (1993) study found social class to be most salient, but also found the achievement gains among minority students, specifically Hispanic and African American males and females. Riordan's (1994) synthesis of studies similarly points to positive effects for girls and minority boys, but not for white boys. He suggests that the benefits for African American and Hispanic students are due to a reversal of the "gender stratification norm" that single sex schools provide. In coeducational settings, minority boys are "expected" to fail, in comparison to their white peers and minority girls. African American and Hispanic single sex schools provide boys opportunities to succeed beyond negative societal expectations.

Addelston's (1996) study also emphasized the importance of class in the construction of masculine identities within the context of single sex and coeducational preparatory education. In a study of white, African American, U.S. Puerto Rican and Latina immigrant girls, Weiler (2000) found that social class background and race appeared to mediate young women's schooling experiences and influence their perceptions of the relevance of schooling in their future lives. Finally, Hudley (1995) argues that the safe and orderly nature of a sex-segregated program can benefit African-American boys. She found an increase in students' self-esteem and school attendance. However, she warns that while "race- and gender-specific programs may be best for some children, ...resegregation is not the only viable alternative for enhancing the achievement motivation of African American youth" (p. 130).

Richard Harker's (2000) recent study of academic achievement outcomes in single sex and coeducational schools in New Zealand finds that separation by sex does not actually guarantee higher test scores for students of minority and low-income backgrounds. Harker's longitudinal analysis of national test score data revealed that "when adequate control is exercised for the different ability levels and the social and ethnic mix of the two types of school, the initial significant differences between them disappear" (2000, p. 216). Attention to a wider range of factors, including race and socioeconomic status, challenges earlier assumptions that single sex schools ensure positive academic outcomes (Marsh, 1991).

The recent attention to and debates around the merits of single gender education are significant, given the lack of consistent conclusions in the research thus far. Moreover, research is largely limited to quantitative, comparative studies in the private sector, providing only one perspective into our understanding of the limits and possibilities of single gender schooling. This study provides a careful investigation of the social and

contextual factors shaping educators' and students' experiences with public single gender education.

METHODOLOGY

From 1998-2000, we were engaged in a longitudinal case study of California's single gender academies. The six districts that operated single gender academies were located across the state of California in a variety of urban, suburban, and rural contexts. The academies served student populations that are diverse in terms of race, ethnicity, socio-economic, and linguistic background. Four of the districts operated a total of eight paired single gender academies at the middle school level, and two operated a total of four paired single gender academies at the high school level. Table 1 includes a description of each district's single gender academies. For the purposes of confidentiality, pseudonyms are used in this report for all place and person names.

Our study relied primarily on qualitative, case study research methods.[7] We chose case study methods for our study because it enables us to examine the process and consequences of single gender schooling in the real life contexts in which they occur. It allows us to present the perspectives of those actually implementing the single gender schooling legislation (Yin, 1989).

Three members of our research team visited each of the single gender academies in California five or six times, for two days each visit. Using semi-structured protocols, we interviewed teachers, principals and/or academy directors, parents, students, and district officials. We interviewed almost all of the teachers in the single gender academies, and the majority of students enrolled during the 1997-98 and 1998-99 school years. We asked about the origin of the academies and why educators and students chose to participate. We inquired about the professional background of teachers and noted their plans for staff development, teacher collaboration, and curriculum development. We also asked teachers, principals, and academy directors about their perceptions of the benefits and weaknesses of the single gender academies.

In our visits to schools, we observed academic and elective classes. When there was the opportunity, we also observed in coeducational classes, as most single gender academies were schools-within-a-school. We focused on student-teacher interactions, student-student interactions, curriculum, and pedagogical strategies. We also interviewed officials at the California Department of Education and the governor's office in order to gather information regarding the single gender schooling legislation and the process that led to its development.

As we will explain, four of the six districts we studied closed their single gender academies in the fall of 1999, after two years of operation. The fifth district closed their schools in the spring of 2000. Only one district continued to operate the single gender schools through the duration of our study and continues to operate currently. We conducted data collection at all closed sites, including conducting interviews with staff, parents, and students, either in the fall of 1999 or spring of 2000, depending on their

[7] We initially planned to also evaluate student achievement outcomes over the three-year period of our study. However, since most of the sites closed in the first two years, this portion of our study did not yield statistically meaningful results.

closure date. This data collection effort proved very useful in learning about teachers' and students' perspectives of their experiences in the single gender academies and their experiences returning to coeducation.

Table 1. Characteristics of the Single Gender Academies in 1997-98

District	Location	Grades served/Type	Student Population	Approximate Ethnic Distribution*
Palm	Urban	Grades 7-12 Self-contained alternative schools.	60 boys; 30 girls Students had a history of truancy, gang violence, or substance abuse.	80% Latino 12% Asian 8% White
Evergreen	Rural	Grades 7-8 Schools within a K-8 school; 2/3 of middle school students were in academies.	28 boys; 30 girls Students were very low income. Most relied on public assistance.	88% White 9% Latino 3% Native American
Cactus	Suburban	Grades 7-8 Schools within a K-8 school; 1/2 of middle school students were in academies.	36 boys; 50 girls Students were a mix of upper-middle, middle, and low income.	65% White 14% Black 9% Asian 8% Latino 3% Pacific Isl.
Birch	Urban	Grade 9 (expanded to grade 10 in 1998-99) Schools within a high school.	18 boys; 22 girls Students were predominantly low income.	32% Latino 27% Black 12% White 14% Asian 10% East Indian 5% Pacific Is.
Pine	Urban	Grades 5-8 Self-contained schools.	90 boys; 50 girls Students were low income and at-risk due to academic, health, and human service needs.	46% Latino 38% Black 18% Pacific Isl.
Oak	Urban	Grades 6-8 Schools within a middle school.	67 girls; 46 boys Students are predominantly low-income.	32% Asian 27% Black 16% Latino 13% White 11% other non white

* Some percentages do not add to 100 due to rounding.

In order to assess the generalizability of our case study findings, we also completed 2-day site visits to three other single gender public schools: (1) an all-girls public high school in the Eastern U.S. that has been open for many years and serves over 1200 students; (2) a comprehensive high school in California that offers single gender classes (boys and girls) for special education students; and (3) a new middle school in California offering single gender education to 1000 students (600 girls; 400 boys). Data collection in these sites has helped us assess whether the findings from our schools are consistent with other single gender public schooling experiments in different contexts and in schools that did not benefit from state start-up grants.

All interviews were taped and transcribed verbatim. We analyzed transcripts from a total of 300+ interviews and field notes from school and classroom observations. Our analysis of the data took two primary forms: coding and case report writing. We coded interview data using HyperResearch qualitative data analysis software. We also wrote detailed descriptive and analytic case reports on each set of academies that facilitated cross-site comparisons and helped us identify emergent themes. These themes are even more powerful when considering that the schools were implemented and organized quite differently in each local context.

Separate (by Sex), But Equal: The California Single Gender Public Schooling Experiment

Schools are not bounded entities and thus we have to understand them within the social, political, and economic contexts in which they are located (Wells et al., 1995). The socio-political context of education in the state of California set the stage for the expansion of school choice in general, and single gender schooling in particular. To better understand this context, we investigated the policy process that led to the advent of the single gender academies legislation. As is often the case, the policy process was not uni-directional or uni-dimensional (Datnow, Hubbard, & Mehan, 1998; Hall & McGinty, 1997). Decisions and actions at the state, school, and district levels did not occur in a linear lock-step fashion. Rather, what occurred in the development and implementation of the single gender schooling legislation was the result of an intertwined set of complex interactions that were influenced by people's beliefs about gender, race, and equality in education, and by structural and cultural factors.

In the 1997-98 school year, California's (now former) Governor Wilson pushed for legislation that resulted in the opening of 12 single gender public academies (6 boys, 6 girls) in 6 districts. In Wilson's 1996 "State of the State Address" he argued that single gender academies were a way to provide public school students more options, more choice, and better preparation for real world opportunities (California Department of Education Fact Sheet: Single Gender Academies Pilot Program, Enclosure A). Later, in a speech at one of the single gender academies, Wilson stated: "Kids need options...and single gender academies will stimulate competition and give kids opportunities they currently do not have because they are trapped in their schools and they need another approach." Expanding school choice was the key motivation for Wilson.

When single gender schooling was proposed, the political climate across the nation and in California in particular was ripe for the expansion of school choice. In the past few years, California voters passed conservative anti-immigrant and anti-affirmative action legislation, and the University of California Regents voted to restrict all affirmative action that benefited the admission of minority students to their campuses. At the same time, the number of charter schools in California continued to grow, staving off calls for voucher programs for several years. These movements to introduce more parental choice into the public system signified a belief that the solution to the ills of public schools was to gear schooling towards the needs and wants of particular groups and to force schools to compete for students. Therefore, the single gender schooling experiment, as designed as an optional program, fit well within the mood of the state.

According to sources at the state level, Wilson initially presented a plan for all-male academies as magnet schools for at-risk boys and all-female schools focused on math and science. His expectation was that sex separation would allow for the establishment of strong disciplinary climates for boys and more attention for girls in traditionally male-favored subjects. It appears that beliefs about gender, race (e.g., boys at risk were likely boys of color), and the definition of public schooling influenced his vision for these new schools. His initial plan for the single gender academies raised concerns among legal advisors and feminists alike. Wilson's attorneys pointed out that attending to perceived gender differences could violate federal law, specifically Title IX. Feminist groups who had long fought for integration and equality saw the separation of girls and boys as a move toward inequality.

Despite Wilson's initial vision for different types of academies for boys and girls, a review of the final legislation and interviews with policymakers at both the State Department of Education and the Governor's office revealed that a major intent was to ensure equality of the boys' and girls' academies. The legislation stated that while single gender academies would "tailor to the differing needs and learning styles of boys as a group and girls as a group," "... if a particular program or curriculum is available to one gender, it shall also be available to those pupils in the other gender who would benefit from the particular program or curriculum" (Education Code Section 58520-58524). In other words, there must be "equal opportunities at both boys' and girls' academies." These equality provisions were important to ensuring equal access to this new school choice option. After all, the "primary goal" of the legislation was to "increase the diversity of California's public educational offering" (Education Code Section 58520-58524).

The legislation instructed the California Superintendent of Public Instruction to award grants on a competitive basis to "10 applicant school districts for the establishment of one single gender academy for girls and one single gender academy for boys, in each of those selected school districts" at the middle or high school levels under the pilot program (Education Code Section 58520-58524). In other words, a district that opens a school for one gender must open a second school for the other. Moreover, both schools must provide equivalent funding, facilities, staff, books, equipment, curriculum, and extracurricular activities, including sports. Finally, while a single gender school may be located on the campus of another school, it must be a complete school, not just a single gender class or program. These legal guidelines reflected an effort to stem legal challenges against single gender public schools.

The push for equal opportunity was apparent in the allocation of funds. California's law allowed the school districts to receive $500,000 to operate single gender academies at the middle or high school levels. The grant was to be divided equally between a district's boys' and girls' academies. The funding was intended as a development grant to schools; they would be able to use the money as they wished, but the expectation was that after two years they would fully fund themselves through average daily attendance (ADA) money. The single gender academies would operate as magnet schools pursuant to the California Education Code. The legislation gave the responsibility of oversight of the single gender academies to the State Department of Education. Management of the program was assigned to the Office of Educational Options. This was "the basis on which this is being offered in California," explained a staff member. No extra funding was provided by the legislation for the administration of these new schools.

Two experienced staff members at the California Department of Education (CDE) were charged with writing the Request for Proposals (RFP) based on the legislation and, subsequently, reviewing the proposals that were submitted. Initially, 24 districts expressed interest in proposing single gender academies. Disappointingly, according to one CDE official, there were only eight school districts that submitted proposals for funding. The grant opportunity was apparently not well marketed. "There need to be presentations at conferences, at the professional associations..." explained one staff member. The timing of the grant application posed a problem for some potential applicants, as there were only two months between the release of the RFP and the proposal deadline. A state official said that administrators in some districts were also concerned about the legalities of single gender public schooling, despite assurances from attorneys that the legislation met the standards of Title IX. Of those eight that submitted proposals, one district's proposal was rejected because their design was not appropriate, and a second district pulled out of the review process because of legal concerns. In the end, only six districts in California were funded to start single gender academies. These districts were not particularly unusual in any way and represented a broad range in terms of demographics, district size, location, and prior success at obtaining grant funding.

One CDE staff member explained that that they encouraged districts to create single gender academies that were "mirror images, and the only difference was the gender of the students. Same teaching materials, access to the same caliber of teachers, not necessarily of the same sex, you know." He added: "We tried to make it as equal as possible." He was careful to say, however, "we stayed out of curriculum.... This was their baby... It was somewhat of an experimental type of activity..." Another staff member explained: "They were required to be absolutely equivalent. So we worked with applicants to be certain that... there was no indication that they were planning to do very different types of things for boys and girls."

In an effort to assist the educators in administering their academies and making decisions about how to ensure equality in the boys and girls academies, the state department set up two meetings among grantees in the first year, something that was not legislated nor funded. These meetings provided a forum for school educators to network, share ideas, and ask questions of the state department officials. The state department also assembled a statewide voluntary board of representatives of major youth, equity, and educational organizations who would serve as quasi-evaluators for the single gender academies. However, this group only met twice. According to the

legislation, schools were required to conduct their own evaluations or use part of their funding to contract with an outside group for evaluation.

While the legislation placed equality at the forefront of the agenda, one staff member was concerned that it did not address systemic gender bias: "To me, gender is such a fundamental underlying issue of social organization that to equate these academies as just another choice is to ignore that larger context. And I think the actual context for these academies needed to be viewed from an educational basis as an issue of discrimination and bias…And then they become an option for a reason." The legislation focused on equality, but did not address what might be done to achieve gender equity.

In sum, the single gender academies pilot program in California was a school choice initiative intended to ensure equal opportunity and access for boys and girls. The above statements reveal that policymakers' intent to ensure equality for boys and girls translated into sameness of facilities, curriculum, and resources. Most of the policymakers themselves – and the legislation – appeared to not pursue gender equity as defined in terms of a socially critical/gender inclusive curriculum or to acknowledge gender bias in society. The primary goal from the onset, after all, was increasing school choice.

Implementing Single Gender Public Schools: Why, How, and for Whom?

The socio-political context of the state was salient in understanding the advent of the single gender academies legislation in California. Likewise, understanding each district's context helps illuminate how and why the legislation was implemented. In our interviews with educators and community members, we asked about why they started single gender academies. We were interested in finding out which students the districts were hoping to serve in the academies, what problems they were aiming to address, and how the design of the academies would help them meet their goals. We asked about how local policies, needs, or constraints influenced their plans, and who supported their initiative and why. Of course we were also interested in the degree to which a desire for achieving gender equity influenced the educators' visions, and more generally, how their ideologies about gender, race, and class influenced the establishment of single gender schooling.

While the state provided the opportunity or conditions for district educators to take the necessary actions to establish single gender academies, it was the extant needs of the districts that created the motivation for seeking the grant, and subsequently, for the organizational structure that ensued. Many administrators sought the $500,000 because of the resources and opportunities that it would provide for students who were not successful in their school systems. In other words, instead of seeing the single gender academies as primarily an opportunity to address gender inequities, most educators saw the grant as a way to help address the more typical educational and social problems of low-achieving students. In most cases, these were low-income students, primarily those of color. This is perhaps not surprising when one considers that the legislation stated that the academies needed to be designed with the "unique educational needs" of their students in mind, pushing some to focus on specific "at risk" populations. Yet, the

legislation did not speak to whether or how the single gender schooling arrangement would meet the needs of "at-risk" students. Moreover, as we will explain, "at risk" meant different things in different communities as well as when applied to boys and girls.

To be sure, all of the educators saw the single gender arrangement as a way to decrease distractions among boys and girls and many sought to improve students' self-esteem. However, none of the proposals showed evidence that the single gender academies were designed to address systemic gender bias. Thus, while one might assume that funding for single gender public schools would provoke genuine interest from educators who held a commitment to single gender education and a strong theory for why they were doing it, in the majority of cases, the reality proved to be quite different. A description of why, how, and for whom each district established single gender academies is provided below.

PALM

Palm is unique in that it is not a school district, but rather a county-wide program for students with severe discipline or academic problems who have been referred out of their regular school districts. Palm is located in a growing county that is both multicultural and multilingual. An enterprising, ambitious, white female principal led the movement to establish single gender academies within the alternative and correctional school system in Palm. She explained, "Why do I go for the single gender? What's so great? It's a great opportunity. It's also money. I can do something. If you have a traditional school... you've got to get extra money." She compared this funding opportunity to the operating budget of another alternative school in the area: "They are on a bare bones budget. They buy nothing. They've got nothing going on over there."

While she mentioned in an interview that she hoped the academies would reduce gender distractions and harassment, the objectives of Palm Single Gender Academies, as stated in the proposal, do not make mention of gender. The objectives are for students to learn in a safe, secure and orderly environment, to reduce incidence of tardiness, truancy and drop out rates, and to increase students' overall achievement scores. The grant funding would allow for the purchase of extra resources to help reach these goals. The school aimed to serve boys and girls in grades 7-12 with a history of truancy, violence, and poor academic performance.

In December 1997, the Palm district opened their self-contained single gender academies (SGAs), located in an office park. The physical structure of the classrooms was non-traditional, with glass walls. Girls and boys shared the small facility at separate times, so both genders never attended school at the same time. Boys and girls attended each day, either at 8am-noon, or 1pm-5pm. Teachers, who rotated teaching both boys and girls, met each day at noon to plan lessons and discuss student progress. Like other schools in the alternative system, the SGAs operated on a trimester system, year-round, and closed only for major holidays and winter and spring breaks. Some students would leave the SGAs to return to their former schools, or could graduate from the SGA with a high school diploma.

The principal of Palm designed a very specific school structure to respond to the needs of her students and to match her own passion, which was technology. There was a zero-

tolerance policy with respect to graffiti, violence, and substance abuse, and students passed through a metal detector as they entered the school. The school's heavy emphasis on technology was an effort to teach students "real world" skills to use in the workplace. The approach to teaching students was through cross-curricular thematic units that focused almost entirely on hands-on, computer-assisted, self-paced learning in a mixed grade setting. With the grant, the principal was able to purchase the technology for Web TV, which provided students with access to on-line curriculum at home. The school also made an effort to work with individual needs of students, through the personalized computer skills program, and through various support services brought in from the community.

EVERGREEN

Evergreen is a small school district located in a rural, economically depressed and isolated small town in California. Many students come from families who were on public assistance because the economically productive lumber industry in the area had virtually disappeared. The community is predominantly white with a small population of Mexican immigrants. The initial idea to apply for funding for single gender academies was presented to the white female (now former) superintendent at a meeting in Sacramento in 1997 during a discussion about the construction of a new school in her district. She was urged to apply because a portion of the money for SGAs was reportedly informally earmarked for two small school districts.

The superintendent was attracted to the grant for the resources that could help address the consequences of living in a geographically isolated setting, the lack of motivation among students, and the high teen pregnancy rates in the community. A school board member saw the money as a "fantastic boost, as far as getting equipment, getting books, and everything," and believed that "higher quality education should naturally follow." Parents agreed. With this support, the movement for single gender academies at the middle school level went forward. Two veteran teachers (one male, one female) were charged with writing the grant proposal.

The academies were geared towards all middle school students in the school district, as the most were performing below the state average. By all accounts, the main purpose of the single gender academies was to broaden students' horizons and increase their motivation for schooling. The four goals listed in the grant proposal were as follows: (1) increased cultural exposure through field trips which would have an educational focus; (2) increased career awareness; (3) increased academic achievement by reducing gender distractions, lowering class size, and reducing the student/teacher ratio; and (4) increased student self-esteem and overcoming negative images by providing strong role models in teachers and by teaching "the value of one's own gender in the scheme of life, and appreciation for the differences between genders."

The single gender academies were located on the campus of an existing coeducational K-8 school. The two teachers who wrote the proposal directed and taught in the academies. Other teachers were added throughout the first year to create a team-teaching situation. Traditional subjects were taught. Most significantly, the single gender academies grant allowed Evergreen teachers to purchase vans to transport students to San Francisco and Sacramento and other places of cultural and historic interest. As

suggested above, the grant also provided for reduced teacher-pupil ratios, computers, and much needed lab equipment. Grant funds allowed educators to offer self-esteem classes. However, the classes were cancelled after the first year because some parents disagreed with their appropriateness, worried that they might teach values contrary to their own.

Cactus

The single gender academies in the Cactus district were established as schools-within-a-school on the campus of a K-8 school in an affluent suburban community. The needs of low-achieving students with behavior problems who had transferred to the school initially propelled the young, energetic, white male principal to apply for the grant. He explained: "All of a sudden we were having students associated with gangs coming in the middle of the year, and no one being able to deal with it at that point." However, in the end, the proposal was written such that the academies could attract a wide range of students (anyone not performing above the 90th percentile). The proposal also stated that the academies would work well for students who were at risk of dropping out of school or who showed traits of low self-esteem or low self-efficacy, or simply those who would benefit from a single gender education.

The proposal described the following objectives for the Cactus single gender academies: (1) choice between co-gender and single gender schooling; (2) better connection between students and their educational environment; (3) development of a strong sense of self-esteem and self-efficacy, and (4) achievement at or above the ninetieth percentile. Increasing gender equity was not among these objectives. However in an interview, the principal said he hoped that, consistent with prior research, girls would be "more comfortable in that environment" in that they would become more competitive and speak more often. He hoped the boys might pay more attention to academics, since girls would not be a distraction. The goal of further expanding school choice in this formerly "white flight" district was what allowed the principal to engage the support of the superintendent and the school board.

Thematic, project-based, curricula were offered in both the boys' and the girls' academies, and this was the same program that was offered in the coeducational middle school. Students rotated from one set of academy classrooms to another and spent lunchtime with students in the coeducational school. The girls academy was located in the part of the K-8 school building, and the boys academy was located in portable classrooms (purchased with grant funds) behind the school. Grant funds were used to pay some teachers' salaries, to pay for an administrative assistant, to pay for a program director half-time in the second year, and to purchase computers and other technology. Some funds were used to release staff to visit an all-boys Catholic school in a nearby city.

BIRCH

Birch is a district comprised of 10 high schools serving a growing metropolitan area with very diverse population in terms of ethnic background and income. The impetus to apply for the single gender academies grant came from a minority male district administrator who was in charge of district fundraising. He suggested the idea to principals, none of whom were immediately enthusiastic. In the end, one school agreed to put together a grant writing team, and the district paid release time for the teachers. The district administrator saw the grant as a vehicle, as one potential way to improve the achievement of low-income and minority students, and perhaps as part of a larger plan for systemic reform. However, when pressed, he admitted that: "Single gender was just another big grant, it's a lot of money." He added: "We got a lot of real estate out of it. Last year we got . . . two portables. A hundred and fifty thousand...We own them forever. We got hardware [computers]. We got all kinds of stuff. You know, you have to look at it a little broader." Reinforcing the fact that gender was of secondary interest, a school administrator stated: "My main interest? Honestly, the gender part of it wasn't huge. I didn't really think about gender bias and all those sorts of things."

The single gender academies in the Birch district aimed to be an option for "incoming ninth grade student populations that have shown a high potential to attend college but have achieved only poor grades in middle school" (Birch Single Gender Academies Proposal, p. 2). The stated purpose of the single gender academies was to "provide parent and students with additional educational opportunities, to help address serious gaps in academic achievement, and to provide each gender with opportunities for success in supportive environment" (p. 1). These purposes could in theory apply to any special program for low-achieving students, not necessarily a single gender program that reflects inquiry into gender inequities that might exist for boys or girls.

The single gender academies operated as schools-within-a large comprehensive high school in a low-income community in the district. Some classes for the SGAs were held in portable classrooms (purchased with grant funds), only a few steps away from the regular high school classrooms. The SGA classrooms were outfitted with Power Mac computers and large televisions purchased with grant funds. Students remained in self-contained classes all day while different teachers moved from room to room. While some teachers taught exclusively in the single gender academies (both boys and girls), some also taught coeducational classes in the regular high school. The teachers in the SGAs had a prep period for mentoring, parent involvement, and curriculum development. Each teacher was assigned 7-10 students as part of a mentor case load and were required to hold meetings with students and maintain regular contact with parents. Students were offered a traditional, college preparatory curriculum.

Grant funds were also used to pay for the salary of an academies director to serve as administrator. The school principal was less involved in the operation of the academies, as he was attending to the administration of the large coeducational high school. Funding was also used to pay for staff development on how to teach math and science in a more equitable fashion. This staff development project included all teachers in the comprehensive high school, not just those in the SGAs. One teacher commented that while he had hoped he would learn about gender equity, the discussion in the staff development "actually got stuck on race" indicating the absence of a focus on gender.

PINE

The Pine district serves a low-income, high-minority urban community known for its high crime rates. Pine operated an all-boys middle school for students in grades 5-8 beginning in the fall of 1996, prior to the state grant becoming available. The school opened as a result of an enterprising, African-American woman superintendent's concern for boys of color in the community, whom she saw as lacking male role models and subject to involvement in violent crimes at a young age. Many boys had a history of discipline and academic problems and lived in very impoverished and unstable homes. Thus, the single gender all-boys school was initially established as a safe haven for at-risk, very low-income boys where they would be provided with "tough love," a structured environment, mentoring from adult males, and basic skills. As with the other districts, the single gender experiment was part of a larger project to meet the needs of at-risk students. As the principal explained, "See, a single gender school is one thing, but you have to also look at your population in your community, and if you do not address those needs, what's the point?"

The boys academy had a young, white, female director responsible for and successful at fundraising. The funding for this all-boys school came from private donors and the school also had a Healthy Start grant. The governor's office became interested in the school and sent representatives to visit. Impressed by what he heard, the superintendent and the school were mentioned in the governor's state of the state address. The governor called the superintendent "a distinguished educator," who helped "troubled boys in grades 6 through 8 learn good study habits and the value of discipline at the all-male [Pine] Academy." He continued, "To help others follow that successful example, our budget last year included funding to open similar ground breaking single sex academies around the state. In this year we will be build[ing] on that start." Soon after that January 1996 speech, the "Single Gender Academies Pilot Program" became a reality. Thus, Pine played an important role in influencing Wilson's vision for the state legislation.

When the single gender academies grant opportunity came available from the state, the school's director applied. The money from the state led the district to open an academy for girls. This was not part of their original vision, but the state funds required both a boys and a girls school on the campus. Thus, the grant allowed Pine to expand and offer classes to girls as well as boys, and enhance the services it offered to the students and their families. The director of the single gender academies explained: "We were able to really create a school with small class size... with extra personnel and then give office space to other social and health care professionals in a cost-effective way." Pine was also able to initially use their funding to have a Sylvan Learning Systems tutoring center on-site to help the students learn basic reading skills.

The academies were located in several portables adjacent to an elementary school, but did not have any connection with the elementary schools. Unlike some of their fellow grant recipients, they were not schools-within-schools. While the boys and girls in the academies, did see each other at recess, they were separated for the rest of the day. The academies offered a traditional, age-graded, subject-centered curriculum, and provided mentoring and a comprehensive set of health and social service agency representatives on-site. A team of people from the police and probation departments, county health services, child welfare and protective services, and the school district met

weekly to coordinate the support services for all the students. The director of the academies explained her philosophy that "programs don't change kids, relationships do." As a result, there were many more adults employed at Pine than the average school, and the staff worked hard at bringing in mentors from local businesses.

Oak

The Oak School District serves an urban metropolitan area with a very diverse population. A middle school in an affluent area of the district (though also serving a diverse population) had piloted two single gender classes for boys and girls in the two years prior to the grant becoming available. The principal explained: "A couple of years ago, we split a science class, boy, girls. We were kind of interested in how that turned out so last year we did a full seventh grade." The impetus for these initial classes was concern about the low self-esteem of adolescent girls documented in *How Schools Shortchange Girls* (AAUW, 1992) and *Reviving Ophelia* (Pipher, 1994). A male teacher explained, "the whole idea behind [the initial experiment], particularly for the girls, was to give them enough strength emotionally, socially, and intellectually so that they can hold their own...in mixed classes."

Instead of serving a randomly selected, heterogeneous group as in the past, the grant-funded single gender academies would aim to serve students not performing to their full potential. The principal explained: "Under-achieving, I think that's how we put it [in the grant] and that's real broad. We deliberately left that very vague because we didn't want it to be a dead end for problem kids or an elite thing either." The principal, who was described as an "innovative...liberal educator" by one of his teachers, initiated the planning and wrote the proposal. The academies sought to address concerns relating to youth who were not doing well in the traditional classroom setting. The objectives were as follows: (1) provide a learning environment with fewer gender distractions; (2) promote an application/orientation curriculum that addresses gender issues; (3) individualized teaching strategies; (4) counseling services as a means to bridge the gap between school and home. The goal of reducing distractions was mentioned by several adults in the school, more than any other reason.

Here again, even at Oak, the single gender academies grant became a vehicle for educating low achieving students, shifting from their original vision of improving gender equity for a mixed ability group of students. In fact, their grant proposal did not mention gender bias, but instead, the proposal somewhat ambiguously stated that the curriculum would address gender issues. Hence, with the grant "underachieving" was the primary focus, whereas in the past it was gender.

The proposed single gender academies at Oak would seek to boost student achievement with smaller class sizes, two full-time counselors, and additional classroom resources. Receiving the state grant also allowed for the preservation of three teacher positions in an era of declining enrollment, and teachers across the school benefited from class size reduction. The grant paid for teacher and counselor salaries and provided for the purchase of classroom libraries, computers, large TVs, scanners, and other technology. The principal believed that while the school could do single gender education without the money, particularly as the physical resources were now there, but

"this is an opportunity in a lot of ways, and when the grant ends, the stuff stays here, but what I'm hoping is that the data ....will show that this is a meaningful option."

The single gender academies in the Oak District occupied six classrooms (on various floors) of the larger three-story middle school. Students in the SGAs passed students in the halls, ate lunch, and even took one class with the students in the regular middle school. In fact, students in the SGAs could conceal their identity as SGA students as they switched classes just like everyone else; they just happened to enter single gender classrooms. The teachers taught an English/social studies and math/science core curriculum, an academic exploratory, physical education, and an elective. This curriculum mirrored that of the regular middle school program and drew from the state frameworks.

CONCLUSION

In sum, the conditions set by the state -- the political climate, legislation, allocation of funding, and request for proposals -- provided the impetus for the establishment of single gender academies in four districts and the expansion of it in two others. However, the policy of single gender education in California was mediated at the school level when implemented by local educators in each community. The above examples offered by California educators for implementing single gender schooling point to the power of money as the catalyst for districts to start or revision the possibilities for such schools in their localities.

Well-intentioned educators, many of them responding to economic and social realities in their schools and communities, found ways to use single gender as a vehicle for meeting needs through this new school choice option. Most commonly, educators sought to address the pressing academic and social issues of the low-achieving students in their communities. The grant money allowed them to address these needs through reduced class sizes, teacher teaming, academic support programs, counseling, and increased technology. Still, no two single gender academies were identical, as educators interpreted the single gender schooling legislation to suit their local constraints, needs, and interests.

It bears noting that the school-within-a-school model provided a rather different climate and structure to the two districts that operated self-contained sites, and tended to be organized much more similarly to the whole school in which they were located, departing less from traditional arrangements. In most cases, students attended single gender classes all day with the same group of boys or girls, but spent lunchtime in the coeducational setting of the larger school. In these respects, unless one entered the particular single gender classrooms, one would presume that the schools were entirely coeducational. On the other hand, in the two districts that operated self-contained single gender academies (Palm and Pine), the schools could not be mistaken for coed schools. At Palm, students never interacted; however, the same teachers taught them. At Pine, students only saw each other only at lunch and different teachers taught the boys and girls, most often of their same gender.

Moreover, the variety of special supports offered in many of the academies made it difficult to tease out the relative effects of the single gender arrangement in and of itself.

We believe that the structure of the schools and the single gender schooling culture simultaneously contributed to the students' learning experiences. However, the single gender organization of the school had some clearly identifiable, yet perhaps unintended, effects on how teachers taught and what students learned about gender, as we will explain in subsequent sections. Before pursuing this issue, we turn to a detailed discussion of the choice of single gender public schooling in each district.

THE CHOICE OF SINGLE GENDER PUBLIC SCHOOLING

While the sociopolitical context is key to understanding the advent of single gender schooling at the state level and in each community, it is in the implementation of the legislation that can unravel the implications of this new form of school choice. We hypothesized that the organization and implementation of each single gender academy would influence who chooses to attend. Undoubtedly, the most important issue regarding school choice in general, and single gender schools in particular, is who chooses and who loses (Fuller, Elmore, & Orfield, 1996). Prior research has shown that because parental choice of schools is race and class informed, it is of limited relevance to low income parents because most choose not to participate (Gewirtz et al., 1995). These parents often experience an absence of sufficient information about the educational options available to them (Fuller et al., 1996; Wells, 1993), and therefore schools of choice often serve middle class families more effectively. As we will explain, the implications of choice and equity worked out quite differently with respect to the single gender academies in most districts in California, and this was largely a feature of how the choice was constructed.

A major goal of California's single gender public schooling legislation was that it would expand choice for students and parents. However, we found that while clearly offering a choice to students within the public sector -- a choice that is typically reserved for students who can afford to attend private schools -- several of the single gender public schools in California were, by design, not open to everyone. In some schools, who was eligible and who was able to attend the single gender academies became a matter that was decided by the district in the proposal of their school and their target population. A number of the California single gender schools became a mechanism by which to educate low-achieving, low-income, at-risk youth. However, the matter of choice was very context-specific, and we believe it is important to tease out some of the subtleties that existed in each site. While there was some measure of choice within all of the districts, the degree of choice varied from site to site and among students.

INFORMATION, RECRUITMENT, AND CHOICE

In our examination of choice and equity issues, we addressed the following critical questions: Was the community as a whole aware that single gender schooling was a choice available to them? How was information disseminated? If there was more interest than space available, how were decisions made regarding who attends? Importantly, did the choice of single gender schooling ameliorate or perpetuate race, ethnic, and gender inequities? As with any expansion of school choice, the

establishment of single gender academies also challenges us to consider the implications of this choice for the remaining school community. That is, when some students choose single gender, does it enhance or constrain the education of those students in the coeducational public school option?

Student recruitment for the single gender academies occurred through a variety of means. In almost all districts, the academies advertised through flyers, mailers to students' homes and to district administrators and social service agencies, and/or through the media. Some students found out about the option from teachers or administrators who personally informed them about it. In the case of Pine and Palm, some students found out about the schools from law enforcement officials or social service providers. In several districts, educators were offered a new choice of where to put students, but it was not a fully democratic choice for students and parents. Once targeted, the parents made the final decision for students to enroll, but they and their children were often strongly encouraged towards the choice.

An assumption of the legislation was that the parents would embrace the choice of single gender public schools. Educators believed it would be quite easy to recruit students. This was true in some communities, such as Evergreen. Largely because of the special resources that were provided (i.e. field trips, computers), two-thirds of the entire middle school population in the district opted to attend the single gender academies (SGAs), which meant that only one coeducational class of thirty students was left at the K-8 school. The academy option was equally popular among boys and girls. Operating close to its intended capacity, the academies enrolled twenty-eight boys and thirty girls in 1997-98. While anyone who applied for the SGAs was accepted, there was speculation by one administrator that the students whose parents could not read English or understand what was being offered in the SGAs did not apply for admission. The students who attended the academies were almost all (88%) white; a few were Latino or Native American (See Table 1), whereas the district as a whole was approximately 53% white.

At Evergreen, the advent of the single gender academies was the first instance of school choice that had ever existed in the district. On the other hand, in the Cactus district, the single gender academies were one of a variety of school choices open to the middle school students in the district. The choice of any school was dependent on space, and entrance into oversubscribed schools was based on a lottery. Other district options included regular middle schools or schools "with approaches varying from traditional, self-contained classrooms and departmentalization to multi-aged, project based learning" (Fact Sheet, Cactus School District, Single Gender Academies). Transportation was not provided to middle school students who wished to attend a school outside of their attendance boundary.

As we discussed, the SGAs at Cactus were initially founded to help the principal find a way to address the special needs of a new population of students, but the proposal was worded such that that they would attract a broad range, virtually anyone who might benefit. The girls who enrolled were primarily high-achieving students (a number of whom were performing *above* the 90th percentile) who were seeking a distraction-free, girls-only environment. One girl stated that "this is an opportunity that's available…And then I thought it would be neat, you know, try something new, just to see if it helped…" The 50 seventh and eighth grade students in the girls academy were predominantly white and from upper middle-class backgrounds and lived in the surrounding upscale

neighborhood in which the school was located. The minority students, mostly southeast Asian and Latino, were from neighboring areas. Some had transferred to the campus because of the SGA option. The girls' academy earned a positive image in the community, and in the second year there was a waiting list.

While the girls academy was full, the boys academy at Cactus was underenrolled. Unlike the girls at Cactus, the majority of the boys who enrolled in the first year were low achievers. The majority of the 36 seventh and eighth grade boys were classified by the school staff as having behavioral problems, and six had learning difficulties. Some were African-American and from low-income families who lived outside of the surrounding area. A teacher explained: "...A few parents... thought of it as a place where they could put their son. Maybe a military school, maybe more of a disciplinary [setting], to correct the problems they were having." In the second year, the profile of the boys' academy changed, as did the teachers. Five of the boys who had exhibited behavior problems were expelled and another four had been counseled out of the academy. In addition, a staff member reported that since the girls' SGA had received positive media attention, boys from private schools had enrolled in the boys SGA. The principal also reported that the "boys are a stronger academic group than last year....There are fewer...resource students." The second-year boys' SGA more closely resembled the girls in achievement levels, ethnicity, and social class than did the first-year boys' SGA, but there were still far fewer boys interested in the choice than the girls.

While Cactus had difficulty recruiting boys, Pine and Palm had difficulty recruiting girls. This created problems for these districts, as the single gender academies grant guidelines stated they districts' needed to serve equal numbers of boys and girls. Palm had many boys who wanted to attend but had trouble recruiting girls in large part because fewer girls have discipline and academic problems that would lead them into the alternative school system. Moreover, as one teacher explained, the single gender academy at Palm did not offer a child care facility, so teenage mothers would be more likely to choose an alternative school with parenting programs. Approximately sixty boys and thirty girls were enrolled in 1997-98, the majority of whom were Latino (See Table 1). In general, the student population was said to mirror other alternative schools in the county in terms of ethnicity and social class background.

Pine had difficulty recruiting girls for some of the same reasons (e.g., fewer girls with troublesome histories), but also because the boys academy had the reputation of being "the school for the bad kids." The principal reported that, "A lot of women don't want their girls to be with boys who may be problems." Teachers and counselors from neighboring schools saw the single gender academies at Pine as a dumping ground to send their most problem students, and in fact were encouraged by the district to do so. In 1997-98, ninety boys and fifty girls enrolled at Pine. Both the boys and girls who attended were a diverse mix of Latino, African-American, and Pacific Islanders, all from low-income backgrounds. (See Table 1).

The disparity in numbers of boys and girls was always a concern of Pine's director. In order to make the SGA more appealing to the parents of girls, the school launched a public relations campaign in order to attract girls with academic problems, not discipline problems. In an article in the local paper, a reporter wrote, "The girls' school will not be for students at risk of dropping out. Instead, the focus will be on math and science, subjects which girls often struggle with. This summer, teachers are studying math and

science curriculum especially designed for girls."[8] In spite of these seductive public relations, it proved difficult for the academy to change the makeup of the students.

In other communities, educators struggled to recruit students of both genders and this ultimately affected student choice. The timing of the opening of the academies (with the funding received only after the start of the school year) proved problematic for some schools as it left insufficient time for advertising the single gender option. As the principal of Oak explained: "Most kids were settled in school by the time we started. The parents didn't want to change." While the planned enrollment was 90 students per academy in grades 6-8, both operated under capacity in 1997-97 with 67 girls and 46 boys enrolled (see Table 1). While the girls academy represented the school as a whole its diverse racial mix of Asian, Latino, African-American, Middle Eastern, and white students, the boys academy had a much greater representation of African American students than the school as a whole. According to the principal, there were a "suspiciously high" number of students designated for resource specialist support who were referred to the academies by classroom teachers who wanted them out of their rooms.

During the second year, recruitment was a bit easier at Oak, as there was more time to plan. The principal at Oak explained: "We asked for teacher recommendations and also publicized during our registration programs and I think that helped. And then some people came from other parts of the city specifically for this." After reading about the school in the newspaper, some parents of girls who had formerly attended private schools came to the SGAs, explained one teacher: "This year...I have a couple of boys but more of the girls have come out of private school." While a more even mix of students in terms of ethnicity and prior achievement, the academies were still operating below capacity in the second year.

A similar situation of under-enrollment occurred at Birch, where students were being recruited to start in the single gender academies in January. Moreover, there were practical constraints in recruitment. First, as some students may have been enrolled in French 1 elsewhere for the first semester, they could not continue with French in the single gender academies as they only offered Spanish 1. Second, the SGAs were one of many special programs at the school and thus had to compete for students who may have already found their niche elsewhere. There were political problems as well; while guidance counselors and administrators at the ten high schools in the district were sent information about the SGAs, they did not actively promote this choice, as they were worried that the transfer of their students into the SGAs would result in a loss of average daily attendance funds at their schools.

In the end, the academies at Birch had to take all willing participants, regardless of whether or not they fit the profile of "underachieving" but with high potential; the boys tended to be very low achieving (some not necessarily believed to exhibit college-going potential), whereas the girls were typically more average. The ethnic mix (see Table 1) in the academies was mostly similar to the district as a whole, except that African-American students were overrepresented, comprising 29% of the girls SGA and 25% of the boys, versus approximately 7% for the school and district as a whole. Capacity of each academy was 25 ninth grade students. In January, 1998, there were 22 girls and 18 boys enrolled at the academy's opening; however, enrollment shrunk by the spring.

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[8] http://server4.service.com/PAW/morgue/news/1997_Jul_23.GENDER.html

The following year, enrollment was also open to tenth graders, but the academies still operated below capacity. Student recruitment was a constant challenge.

It bears noting that there was some attrition from one year to the next in all academies. In some cases, this was according to the students' choice. In others, it was the educators' choice. Schools were sometimes able to remove, push out, or counsel out students who they felt did not belong. In almost every school, we heard stories of students who were removed for disciplinary reasons, particularly boys. Some students were removed if they were not performing up to the academic or social expectations of the academies.

WHAT ATTRACTED PARENTS AND STUDENTS TO THE SINGLE GENDER ACADEMIES?

Often, educators attempted to sell parents and students on the special resources (e.g., smaller class size, field trips, mentoring, technology) offered by many of the single gender academies. In many cases, parents and students were attracted by these resources, and to a lesser degree by the single gender arrangement. At Palm, brochures and flyers highlighted technology and career skills and invited students to "actively participate in your own education!" The school's technology focus was a major draw for students, whose other option would be to enroll in a much less resource-rich coeducational alternative school. As one young woman remarked, "it makes people want to learn here ...cause they teach us in an interesting way." Similarly, a teacher recalled that the parents in Evergreen were "jazzed about the opportunity for the kids." When asked why they enrolled in the single gender academies, students most commonly said that their parents wanted them to try it, usually citing the opportunities to go on field trips and use computers. Similarly, at Birch, an administrator said: "I think also one of the draws for both sets of parents were the smaller class size and the increased attention."

Very few boys and girls admitted to choosing the academies because they were single sex. Rarely was the goal of gender empowerment in a single sex setting mentioned, except for a few parents of girls at Cactus. However, numerous students and parents mentioned the goal of lessening distractions in class as being important to them. As one male student said, "Like I get talkative and start talking to them [girls], then I get caught by the teacher...." The same was true for girls. One girl explained: "my Mom she thought it would be a good idea cause she thinks I like boys too much. I'm boy crazy or whatever." In a few cases, parents believed that by placing their children in the SGAs, they would be subjected to less teasing.

At Oak and at Birch in particular, several Muslim students chose the single gender academies for religious reasons. Some students explained that their religion did not endorse coeducation, particularly for girls, once students reach adolescence. In some cases, students told us that while boys might be allowed to attend coeducational schools, girls would be more likely to be home-schooled. As one boy at Oak reported, his parents made him join the SGA because "it's part of [his] religion." A girl at Birch explained: "Ever since I've grown, my parents feel that I should be separated from boys because they think it's not a good surrounding. I think it's not a good surrounding. You know the drugs and the sex." She might have been home-schooled if not for the single gender academy option.

Significantly, the majority of students, both boys and girls, mentioned their mothers as central in their decision to enroll in the single gender academies, rarely mentioning both parents or just fathers. In most schools, we heard that girls asked their parents if they could attend, whereas boys were more likely to be forced to attend. Many girls looked favorably upon the opportunity to be in classes without boys, believing these environments would be more comfortable. A teacher at Birch explained: "The girls chose to be in...and their parents just kind of signed on...The boys are in there, I think, because their parents want them to be there." At this school, there was more initial interest among the girls and their families. He also stated: "The girls' parents could say, 'Well, we're going to do this,' and the girls would go along." However, some of the boys protested saying, "I don't want to be with all boys, that's stupid, that's gay," according to an administrator.

In several districts, parents' choice of the single gender academies was shaped in part by the other options available. At Oak, a few parents reportedly saw the academic reputation of the school as a whole as a draw, and less so the single gender nature of the program. Often, such information was learned through informal networks. As one student said, "my mom's friend works for [the district] and...she said this is like the best school." One Chinese boy explained he and his parents were not specifically interested in the single gender aspect of the school, but he wouldn't have been able to attend the coeducational school because there were already too many students of his ethnicity and the district operated with racial balance requirements. The shaping of options worked out quite differently in Evergreen. Students who did not elect to attend the single gender academies had the choice to stay in the one remaining coeducational class on campus with a teacher who was new to the district and was reported to be unprepared to teach. Moreover, because so many of the better students were choosing the single gender setting, the coed class was left with the students who had more disciplinary problems. Consequently, we are forced to qualify the term "choice" at Evergreen, since the coed option had become less desirable.

In conclusion, we found that in most cases the choice of single gender academies was structured by educators in their design of the academies, the timing of the grant, the other available options, and the special resources the academies offered. In some cases, single gender education was attractive to parents as a way to lessen distractions, but the additional resources offered by the academies were also very important to them. With the exception of the girls who enrolled in the single gender academy at Cactus and the students who attended Evergreen, the other academies served student populations that tended to be more at-risk, of color, and/or low achieving than those attending regular schooling options in their districts. In these cases, the academies became a place to put students who posed challenges to educators. While indeed students did need to choose to attend, they were often recruited by educators who thought the academies would solve some of their academic and social problems.

In some respects, the legislation expanded choice options. Yet to remain consistent with the democratic goals of public education, school choice policies must ensure equal access and equal opportunity. Our findings suggest that the single gender academies did not all provide equal access, nor did they necessarily having the same expectations or provide the gender equitable education to girls and boys, as we explain below.

How Educators' Ideologies About Gender Informed Classroom Practice

In order to further understand the implementation of single gender academies, we examined the influence of educators' ideologies about gender on curriculum and instruction in the single gender academies. To this end, we investigated whether and how classroom practices and school organization led to a broadening of gender role expectations or a reinforcement of gender stereotypes. We analyzed the intended and unintended consequences of the single gender academies with respect to gender equity.

The single gender schooling legislation in California states that the single gender academies should "tailor to the differing needs and learning styles of boys as a group and girls as a group," as well as provide "equal opportunity in both boys and girls academies" (Education Code Section 58520-58524). These dual and ambiguous goals raise tensions about providing something "separate" on the one hand, but "equal" on the other. At the forefront are divergent opinions about whether boys and girls should be educated differently or the same in their separate settings. These questions beg for an examination of how fundamental notions about gender shape ideologies about schooling for boys and girls. In other words, do gender differences evolve from biological or social constructions of gender? What pedagogical decisions are made by educators depending on their conceptions of gender? Ideological support that weighs heavily on the side of gendered behavior as mostly the result of innate characteristics assumes a static and predetermined notion of gender. For educators, this might mean that gendered traits are immutable and that classroom practices must be designed to accommodate them.

Research on educators' constructions of intelligence warns of the consequences of viewing student characteristics as fixed. In a study of schools attempting to dismantle high school tracking programs, Oakes et al. (1997) found that many educators' ideological reasons for maintaining tracking were tied to prevailing norms about race and social class. Intelligence was seen as static, unchanging, and supportive of tracking practices that disadvantaged minority students. Oakes and her colleagues point out that the culturally-based standard against which students are measured is often never questioned; thus, unjust practices remain intact.

Long-standing belief systems regarding race and gender influence school practices. African Americans and members of other minority groups (such as women) face what Claude Steele (1997, p. 613) refers to as the barrier of "stereotype threat," that is, "the threat that others' judgments or their own actions will *negatively* stereotype them in the domain [school]." Women, for example, have been stereotyped as deficient in math. African Americans have been stereotyped as lacking abilities in many scholastic domains. As a result, Steele says that both groups suffer from "double vulnerability" (Steele, 1992). Their actions in the classroom are judged as evidence of their inferiority in a particular subject area in which they are suspected to be weak, as justification of their need for particular interventions, and as affirmation of their racial or gender inferiority.

Both Oakes and Steele remind us of the salience of educators' ideologies about social constructs such as race and gender and how they inform policies and practices in the classroom. We found that the single sex public schools tailored curriculum, instruction

and discipline to match educators' perceptions of the different educational and social needs of boys and girls. By teaching to perceived differences, in many cases, educators unwittingly ignored the power of schooling in shaping gender ideologies. In the sections that follow, we discuss how educators either constructed a more emancipatory notion of gender equity or perpetuated gender stereotypes. It is important to note that the students, also socialized in gendered ways, contributed, albeit unintentionally, to gender inequalities when they failed to challenge gender stereotypes.

In this section, we question the merits of educating boys and girls separately, especially when separation means that gender differences are left unchallenged and that empowerment and ultimately gender equity is subsumed under rhetoric of difference. We raise doubt about a model of schooling that espouses equality of resources over equity. Such debates demand discussions about the rationale of tailoring to differential gender needs and lead to questions as to whether gender equity is likely to be achieved in single gender public schooling.

Curriculum and Instruction

In keeping with the legislation, teachers and administrators were very concerned about spending resources equally and offering the same curriculum to boys and girls. As the superintendent in one district explained: "We wanted to be Title IX clean, on track. I mean, if somebody got a number 2 pencil, the other academy got the same one. There was not going to be a difference." Similarly, in response to the question, "to what extent is gender included in your plans for curriculum?" an administrator of one set of academies responded: "At this point in time, it isn't. We're strictly following the grant guidelines, which indicate that we will do exactly the same for boys as for girls and vice-versa."

Teachers in another district explained that the same literature, social studies, and science lesson plans were used in both the boys and girls academies. A social studies teacher confirmed that she taught the lessons "exactly the same" to each group. When asked to define gender equity, one educator responded: "Equality between the sexes, between the genders. Equality of opportunity." Teachers believed that everything that is taught to one gender must be taught to the other, thus they attempted to make the curriculum "gender neutral." In practice, this sometimes meant that the curriculum was oriented toward the males, as teachers were very concerned about maintaining order in the all boys classes and thus chose texts that they thought the boys could relate to. In one instance, a principal explained, "we are going to do video conferencing in Denmark this month, and both the boys and girls will learn how to design a car."

All of the teachers were very intent on providing the same curriculum to both boys and girls, in part to be compliant with the legislation, but also in part as an assurance of gender equity, as they defined it in terms of equality. This typically translated into teachers selecting books for the students that were written by male authors with male protagonists. Even when girls protested that they wanted something different, teachers typically adhered to a common curriculum that ultimately satisfied the boys. Some teachers, however, said that they geared the curriculum towards students' interests, which just "naturally" varied by gender. For example, at one school, students were given the opportunity to choose novels (from a list of acceptable books) in their English

literature classes. In the girls' academy, the students chose to read *Pride and Prejudice*. In the boys' academy, the students chose to read *All Quiet on the Western Front*. One teacher explained: "The girls tend to choose the romantic spiel…and the guys tend to go for the action."

When students in one district's academies were studying the early history of the United States and the migration of settlers to the West, boys took a survival skills class from a young male teacher and the girls studied quilting and sewing, taught by middle-aged women teachers. These elective class offerings appeared to be driven by teachers' gendered identities and personal interests as well as by the students' demands. At another school, a male teacher said he used sports to clarify or simplify ideas for his male students because "guys can kind of relate to that." The single gender setting allowed this teacher to talk about the important pastimes for the men in this community and thus the merits of "huntin' and fishin'" were actively debated. In sum, it appears that when teachers geared the curriculum to respond to students' interests, they perhaps unintentionally reinforced traditional gender roles. Significantly, in most cases, teachers did little to change student choices by suggesting alternative book choices or topics that might potentially challenge gendered dispositions.

Reflection about the issue of gender equity, interpreted as being anything more than equality, was rare. Some women teachers believed gender equity, and gender issues in general, were simply not "on the radar screen" of most school administrators. As one teacher remarked: "…Any acknowledgment of gender would be a step in the right direction because I never hear it. I never hear it at all. I hear things about race and that's primarily because [the school is] so multi-racial." Similarly, another educator believed that the waning support for the single gender academies at her school site was related to the lack of interest in gender equity: "I really think that sort of sexism and gender inequity has been pushed way back in to the background…. So, I think that mentality is part of the reason why there was very little support for the program. Because I don't really think the district, or the school site, really believes or [is]…reflected on gender inequity."

No doubt, teachers' ideologies arise from experiences in a society that socializes individuals to learn appropriate gender roles early on (Thorne, 1993; Weitzman, 1975), and one in which, both in society in general and in schools specifically, men occupy positions of higher status and women face constraints due to their gender (Acker, 1996; Biklen, 1995; Datnow, 1998; Hubbard & Datnow, 2000b). As in coeducational school environments, teachers' ideologies about gender influence their actions in single gender settings (Streitmatter, 1999). Many teachers acted on the assumption that boys and girls are different and that they have different life issues and learning styles. In general, we found confusion around understandings of gender. Many educators could not get away from a biological construction of gender and thus employed different teaching strategies, and they gave gender-specific messages about what it means to be a man or a woman. Educators organized instruction to attend to what they perceived as gender-specific needs of students. One of the obvious markers of this was the assignment of male teachers to male students and female teachers to female students that occurred in two districts.

More commonly, educators attended to perceived gender-based needs of students by adjusting their instructional methods accordingly. Echoing the beliefs of many teachers we spoke to, a male teacher at one school stated that he believed that boys are "much

more kinesthetic; girls are a little more linguistic" and that this was "just a natural thing." At classrooms in this school and others, the girls were often given opportunities to work in collaborative groups, whereas boys were taught in a more traditional fashion. Comparing the boys and the girls academies, one principal explained that in the girls academy, "We have cooperative learning, we have rubrics, we have tables. ... My question now is, in doing that, have we short-changed the boys?" He went on to explain: "The all-boys schools that I'm aware of have very traditional education...tables, [desks in] rows, and so we're looking at that. We've gone to grades. I don't know that we'll go to desks, but..."

Similarly, at another site, the director of the single gender academies said that while the curriculum was the same for the boys and the girls, the instructional methods needed to be gender-specific. He stated:

> [T]he girls do much better cooperatively. ... And they can spend a lot more time on [an activity] and they won't lose much interest. And the boys, if they throw a little bit of competition in there they'll get it done. And I know those are stereotypes that we hear about how girls and boys learn differently, but they seem to be true.

In sum, educators typically made sense of the ambiguous goals of the single gender schooling legislation by offering the same curriculum in both academies, but by employing different instructional techniques and electives to respond to what they perceived to be gender-specific needs. While reflecting responses to the students' needs, the actions of educators also reflect their own ideologies about gender. Educators' decisions were influenced by their perspectives about gender equity or, conversely, gender stereotypes.

GENDER DIFFERENCES IN DISCIPLINE

Educators' ideologies about gender also influenced their management approaches in all-boys and all-girls classes. Most educators operated on the assumption that boys needed discipline and girls needed nurturing. In some cases, Governor Wilson's call for schools that focused on discipline for boys and curriculum opportunities for girls appeared to shape teachers' and administrators' perceptions of a specific set of gender-based needs. One state policymaker recalled that "Pete Wilson's original motivation was to help boys who were in trouble. Or at least that's what he said and I have no reason to think that there was anything else. And then he was persuaded that it could help girls too." Wilson's expanded goal for single gender academies to help girls was made clear in a speech he gave to students and faculty at one district's single gender academies. Because of his wife's schooling experience, Wilson said he recognized the importance of improving science and math opportunities for girls. In one district, a similar vision resulted in academies that one educator described as "an opportunity for the girls and a fix-it for the boys."

Although perhaps influenced by Wilson's articulation, educators also came to school with ideologies about gender that were shaped by their own socialization. Once at school, teachers responded to the actions of their students, interpreting student behavior in a very gender-specific way. When boys misbehaved or when girls were academically

focused (and some students fit these models because of the population the schools were designed to serve), educators beliefs were validated. Teacher-student interactions and school policies then institutionalized the wisdom of treating boys and girls in different ways and did little if anything to challenge gender stereotypes along these lines.

As we explained, some of the academies drew their male population of students from district referral lists comprised of boys who either had poor academic achievement records, excessive absences, unresolved health and human services needs or repeated discipline problems. The result was that many boys were perceived as "tough " and by every account they acted tough. One male teacher in a boys academy reported that "for the first three months of school, [his] job was basicaily just to keep kids [boys] quiet and sitting down and not throwing chairs at each other." An administrator stated,

> These kids are smart. Oh, don't ever underestimate these kids. When they get underneath your skin and they know it, they stay there. They stay there and they push the buttons to keep you going, to see how far they can get to you before you have a nervous breakdown. And that's their only objective, you know. Once they know they've got you, that's it. They're going to work you.

The grant funds helped this administrator to hire two vice principals to handle discipline. During one visit, we found that the boys' classes were in a "lock down" status and no one was allowed to enter or leave the classroom. The principal confessed that he had to take over the boys classes for teachers who were very stressed by students' bad behavior. He established an "opportunity room" where students (mostly boys) were referred for disciplinary action. One of the assistant principals stated, "We got to the point where we would have literally detention every day, and it would be five males [adults] in there with maybe 20 or 30 boys at any given time and there was a lot of screaming, yelling going on."

At another academy where many of the students, particularly the boys, had spent time in juvenile hall, the administrators felt it advisable to organize a facility that was run with similar disciplinary constraints. Students entered the school by passing through a metal detector designed to check for weapons. Boys and girls were not permitted to see each other. Over time and with a new administrative staff, students experienced even stricter discipline. Ironically, when discipline got tighter, more problems seemed to occur. During our last visit to the school, police were on campus because students had written gang graffiti on the school walls, an event that had not occurred in the two years prior to this incident.

Teachers at another set of academies geared towards a more traditional public school clientele reported similar assessments of boys, suggesting they were "talkative, loud, and could not sit still." One teacher claimed that boys were "abusive with their free time," "mean with each other," and couldn't "keep their hands off each other." Some educators expressed the belief that their at-risk population of boys were difficult and would have in retrospect benefited more from an "academic boot camp," which would ideally be taught by male teachers. Coming from single parent homes and gangs, educators claimed that the boys needed "role models" and "class management." The tone and approach of discipline for boys was often quite harsh and usually meant that their classes were "very regimented." As the comments about single parenthood, gang life, and community imply, educators' ideologies about race, ethnicity, and class also informed their beliefs about what was right for students.

Male students often agreed with their teachers' descriptions of their behavior. They admitted that they (as opposed to the girls) made "all the ruckus." Boys admitted they were "not real good" and teachers "kept sending [them] down to the counselors and stuff." When asked why, they reported it was "because we were running wild." Students' actions coupled with teachers' perceptions of what boys needed caused discipline to become even stricter. Other male students took issue with what they felt to be assumptions about males' and females' behavior. Students talked about discipline as gendered practice; that is, the majority of detentions were given to boys. When asked if the girls received detention, the boys' claimed that girls were rarely seen in detention. These boys saw this unequal distribution of punishment as the result of unfair teachers' biases done for "unlegitimate reasons." Regardless of whether extra discipline was justified for the boys, these boys felt they were singled out and presumed to behave poorly.

Teachers sent messages to the students that boys needed extra discipline, and indeed, some teachers saw the role of the academy as a place to enforce that discipline. One student explained that his teacher said to his mom, "We need to show those academy boys how things work here, by picking on them and giving them detentions." Academy boys were made to feel that they were more poorly behaved than their non-academy male peers. Clearly many of the boys who enrolled in the academies already had disciplinary problems, but many did not. Yet, when boys were together as a group all day, both teachers and students projected assumptions that an all-male class was inevitably problematic.

The situation was exacerbated by the constant comparisons that some teachers made between the boys and girls (discussed in more detail in our section on students' articulations of gender). These comparisons pitted boys and girls against one another and reinforced gender stereotypes. A student recounted a classroom discussion in which the teacher told his male students "how bad we are and that they're [girls] doing a lot better than we are. That they stay on focus and get their work done and stuff. Like we're some bad kids and we don't do our work all the time... and we're just copying off the girls." This teacher as well as some administrators made discipline a gendered issue and promoted notions of difference by assuming that all boys were discipline problems and all girls were well-behaved.

Most educators believed that girls needed a softer approach to discipline. One vice-principal explained that "you can't treat both genders the same." With the boys, he felt an authoritarian style of discipline was most effective, but "girls are totally different." He said he had to "learn to communicate with the girls" by not yelling at them, but rather by showing respect. At several schools, when girls misbehaved in their classes generally, it was interpreted as "girls being catty" or "gossipy." These were behaviors that teachers felt were "normal" for girls. One woman teacher indicated that her seventh grade girls did not need the strict discipline prescribed for the boys. In fact, if "her girls" were referred to the detention room, she wouldn't let them go because the experience was too humiliating and she felt that it was unnecessary. Instead, she protected her girls in a very nurturing way. She gave her girls much more freedom in the classroom than did her male colleagues, some of whom admitted to running their classes in "military style."

Classroom discipline exacted different outcomes for boys and girls under these very different classroom management strategies. During a class-wide interview with the girls

in one academy, we found in one class that the girls' teacher permitted them to sit on their desks and to move around to make sure they were more comfortable and able to pay attention. This scene was in sharp contrast to the boys' class where their teacher constantly reprimanded them and insisted that there be no talking and no movement. The girls responded by being thoroughly engaged in the interview, the boys responded by being extremely rowdy and inattentive, yelling rude comments to each other and making every attempt to get out of their seats.

CONCLUSION

In sum, we found that educators typically made sense of the ambiguous goals of the legislation by offering the same curriculum and equal resources (e.g., textbooks, computers) in both the boys' and girls' academies. They employed different instructional techniques and electives, as well as initiated different modes of discipline and class management to respond to what they perceived to be gender-specific needs. Most curriculum and pedagogy, by being gender-neutral or even differentiated, reinforced traditional gender roles and did little if anything to advance gender equity. Overall, there was little time for deep inquiry about gender among educators, and a general lack of discussion about what it meant to be teaching boys and girls in single sex classrooms. Even though almost all of the districts had planned staff development sessions to raise gender awareness (as part of their academy proposals), very few opportunities were actually provided.

These findings are not surprising, as California's single gender academies legislation did not include fostering gender equity as an expressed goal. Instead, the single gender academies legislation and Title IX encouraged educators to be concerned about equality of resources and opportunities, leaving gender equity unexamined and at the discretion of individual educators. In effect, educators' gendered perceptions that boys need discipline and girls need nurturing influenced school policies, reinforced gender stereotypes and did not advance gender equity. The gender bias problem, particularly as applied to girls, was essentially a non-issue in these schools and thus mirrored the current position of gender in society (Blackmore, 1999). Language that focused on the distribution of resources ignored the consequences of gendered institutional practices that have the potential to shape wider social fields of power and control. Addressing gender bias in society was the goal of a few teachers, but if and when messages of this sort were conveyed, they were mostly conveyed to the girls, as we will explain below.

BEYOND ACADEMICS: SOCIAL AND MORAL GUIDANCE IN SINGLE GENDER SCHOOLS

One of the main benefits of the academies was that the separation of students by gender allowed some teachers to impart social and moral lessons to their students. Some research has suggested that sex separation will provide a safe space for kids to explore personal identity issues and life decisions, provide a strong gender group identity, and lead to empowerment (Streitmatter, 1999). While by no means did it occur in every classroom, students (both boys and girls) were taught *life lessons* with respect to decisions about dating, marriage, and pregnancy. In some cases, female teachers also used the single sex setting as a place to impart messages (mostly to the girls) that were aimed at increasing gender equity in society or challenging traditional gender roles. Often, however, especially in the case of male teachers, traditional gender roles were either not addressed, or were explicitly reinforced.

DATING, MARRIAGE AND PREGNANCY

We found many instances when students and teachers were able to establish important and meaningful relationships. Some teachers took it upon themselves to become involved with their students in ways that went beyond academics. These teachers imparted moral guidance to their students and found some success in doing so. Many of the students in this study had come to believe, either through the messages they received in their homes, schools, communities and/or in their peer groups, that it was acceptable to engage in dating, marriage, and/or pregnancy at an early age. Some of the teachers in our study complained that their students were living in a fantasy world that was leading them to make wrong choices -- ones that could potentially damage their immediate and future lives. As one teacher stated, her female students bought into the notion that "they will marry Prince Charming and live happily ever after." In many cases, the girls believed that "the boy who goes to bed with them is the boy that will marry them." Similar to the women in Holland and Eisenhart's (1990) study and the women and men in Anderson's (1990) study, romance took precedence in their lives. The boys believed they could show their manliness by having many sexual partners. For both young men and young women, romance threatened to derail their academic progress. According to some of the teachers in the single gender academies, these students were in desperate need of a "reality check."

In many cases, the single gender setting seemed particularly well positioned to address these needs. Some teachers (both male and female) utilized the single gender arrangement to impart gender-specific messages. Without the presence of the opposite sex, these teachers admitted that they were able to have candid conversations with their students that were essential for their emotional and physical well-being. These conversations were particularly useful when the teachers shared backgrounds with the students and thus understood the pressures they faced as young men or women, anticipated their difficulties, and were prepared to help them strategize ways to circumvent or overcome them.

Because these teachers had the advantage of a single gender setting, they could have the kinds of conversations that needed to take place. A Latina teacher who taught girls

in one single gender academy reported an example of such an exchange. Using her street-savvy perspective, she imparted some hard lessons to her girls about careers, dating, husbands, and pregnancy. She told them:

> You know from all the colleges and all the places that I've been, and I've been halfway around the world with my parents, I've never heard a man say, "I love this woman because she swears like a sailor. Or I love my woman because she beats up everybody on the block. Or, I love my woman because she had nine kids but don't have no job." You know I never hear that. And I want to know how many of you hear that. I said, "how many of the relationships that you've seen --the woman is on welfare and the boyfriend's trying to do something, he gives her two or three babies and he takes off?" I said, "is that what you want to be?" So we talked about being the dogcatcher. Don't let them run you. You run them. And so that's a skill that I've given them.

She further explained that a lot of the girls' boyfriends protested her messages saying, "...Don't tell them that." But she said: "Oh no, no, no. I've got to inform my girls." She felt she was able to give this kind of advice because she had time alone with the girls.

Engaging in unprotected sexual relationships is a serious issue for adolescents. Educators saw a critical need for open, candid discussions about the risks of pregnancy, concerned that students often delude themselves into believing that they would not get pregnant or that if they did, it would not negatively impact their lives. While most public coeducational schools address this topic in their coeducational health classes, according to the students in our study, those conversations were much less candid and, therefore, much less helpful. In the coed setting, students claimed they were embarrassed and reluctant to speak out. The discussions were different in the single gender setting. A Latino teacher who taught both boys and girls (at separate times) at the same single gender academy consciously utilized the single gender setting to connect with his students and to offer them the gender-specific, real-life advice he felt they needed to hear.

Students confirmed that he gave "good advice," in fact, "better advice than the other teachers." We encouraged this teacher to reveal his strategy for helping students. He admitted that the "advice" he gave was a deliberate and significant part of his curriculum:

T: I try to be real with them. I have the experiences. I come from a gang background, drug environment, the whole shebang...My father was in prison, I know that lifestyle, my mother's been, you know, with these abusive men, and I know what's going on. And my younger sister, my 18-year-old sister, ... I thought she was gonna make it, she graduated from high school, ended up getting pregnant before she graduated, and this guy dumps her and gets married with somebody else, and leaves her a single mother, so...

Int: Do you tell these girls that?

T: Oh, yeah...

Int: And the boys, do you tell the girls and the boys?

T: Yes, yes. And every...you know, when these guys are saying, yeah, I'm getting it on with ...oh, yeah, so many girls. I say, "you know what, man, you better be responsible and"... I say, "you know what, ... it might seem glamorous to you, but let me tell you the reality of things"... But with the girls, the girls tend to open up

> and say, "I have a boyfriend, oh, look at my hickeys." And I walk in and I say, "you know what happened to you, let me give you my story," you know. And a lot of these girls have these fantasies and I've seen it when I was a young boy, I've seen girls writing to pen pals in prison, and they think it's so glamorous and oh, yeah, these men are so powerful. And I say, "these guys sound so good, let me tell you what they're saying, hey, baby, how you doing. You look so great." I say, "yes, they sound like this. Yes, they're totally in love with you when they're in prison, but when they come out they're going to try to manipulate you, they're going to abuse you and try to use you." And so I try to tell them, yes, I try to give them my stories and my background...In that sense, I guess, I do get through to some of them with it.

In sum, some of the girls and boys at these single gender academies participated in frank discussions about gender roles, dating, and pregnancy in which their teachers imparted strong messages. Their teachers felt that the single gender settings allowed them the opportunity to talk to boys and girls about their real life circumstances unencumbered by the presence of students of the other sex. These teachers taught their students important life lessons.

The Significance of Gender in Teacher-Student Relations

In order to better understand the influence of the teacher on the implementation of single gender academies, we examined how teachers' characteristics influenced their interactions with students. We found that when teachers' backgrounds matched the backgrounds of their students, the conversations were particularly poignant, but background meant more than just sharing gender or race. Many of the successful teachers came from the same troubled background as their students. They could recount their own experiences with drugs, alcohol and the law. For other teachers, it was simply a strong motivation to extend their teaching responsibilities beyond purely academic endeavors.

Arguably, it was the teachers' ability and willingness to understand the lives of their students and their insight in knowing *what* and *how* to talk to the students that mattered most. Although both teachers described above are Latino, which perhaps facilitated a more spontaneous insider relationship with their Latino students, their other non-Latino students benefited from relationships with them that were just as profound. The male teacher we described had important discussions with both the girls and the boys. Both teachers were able to transcend racial, gender and class boundaries and give their students the powerful messages they needed to hear.

Often, the assumption is that boys need male teachers and girls need female teachers in order to have the kind of discussions that are candid and emancipatory. Yet we found that the gender match between student and teacher was insufficient to explain events within the single gender schools. For example, some African-American male teachers struggled to form relationships with their African-American male students. These teachers had low expectations for the boys' success and were unable to develop the kinds of relationships that fostered academic and social development. Conversely, some Latino male and female teachers who taught both the girls and the boys were

extremely effective in that they could relate to the majority of their students, see their potential and improve their academic and social skills.

Teachers and students struggled to understand instances when they were unable to have the kinds of discussions that were beneficial and possible in the single sex setting. It seemed easy for both teachers and students to point to the fact a gender mismatch between teacher and students could prohibit the exchange. For example, one teacher said that while he tried to have discussions about women's issues with the girls, it did not work well; he and the students were less comfortable with such conversations because he was a man. Many students concurred, claiming it was important to have a teacher who was the same sex.

Many students expected they would have the same sex teacher when they enrolled in the single gender academies, but this was not always the case. For some students, this was disturbing. In general, girls claimed that they needed female teachers because they were more understanding "of what we're going through." Some girls saw their male teachers as harsher and stricter and as one student explained, male teachers told them that they would "just have to deal with it [their problems]." This unsympathetic tone did not sit will with female students, who pointed out, "See, we're women. We're a different sex. And we have different problems than they [the male teachers have] to deal with." For the girls, this meant they needed more sensitive teachers, i.e., women.

Some students did not mind and even enjoyed having a teacher of the opposite sex. Most often these students were boys. Although boys admitted to feeling more comfortable with male teachers, one boy explained: "It depends on how they act. Some women teachers are tripping [i.e., cool] too. I'm telling the truth." A few girls agreed. For these students, the gender of the teacher was less important than whether the teacher cared about students. In one academy, girls were very critical of a female teacher who they described as "mean." It was only with particularly sensitive issues that students unequivocally preferred a teacher of the same gender. One girls said, "Like if we're talking about this [referring to a women's health issue] then I would like a woman. But overall I don't really care."

It is possible that male teachers were not as sensitive or as understanding of the girls as the female teachers and vice versa, but rather than attempt to break down stereotypes or to believe that change was possible, the status quo was allowed to prevail. As one student so insightfully put it, "But then like we should have also like the other gender's perspective. Like I don't think Mr. X *[mis]understands* because he doesn't *want* to understand how we are. You know?" But getting Mr. X to understand would take some discussion and we never saw any evidence that this opportunity occurred. We found that in many cases, both men and women were not always skilled at dealing with students of the opposite sex because no effort was made to educate and disrupt the "misunderstandings" that occurred between them.

In a few instances, the teachers' attention to personal, gender-related issues made students uncomfortable, even when the teacher was of the same sex. For example, one middle school student said that her teacher "would talk about bras, and everything, it was weird, I didn't like it when she did that." Students were uneasy with the bounds that sometimes were crossed by teachers who felt it was easier to take risks, or to relate to the adolescent issues of their students, in the single gender setting.

CHALLENGING AND SUSTAINING TRADITIONAL GENDER ROLES

We found that particularly meaningful discussions occurred when a teacher considered gender equity to be part of their *personal* goal for single gender education. In addition to discussions about dating, marriage, etc., some female teachers also delved into issues of how societal expectations around gender might shape the girls' career experiences. We found a few teachers who had an explicit gender equity agenda. These tended to be women teachers who were enlightened to issues of sexism in society, typically through their own education or life experiences, and who chose to address such issues in their classes with girls.

One young woman teacher included gender equity and the deconstruction of traditional gender roles as a goal for both her boys and her girls classes. She talked about an activity where students broke into groups to come up with their description of an ideal man or woman. She then led the students in a deconstruction of these ideals. While she did this activity with both boys and girls, she said, "I feel like I've gotten a bit further with the girls in terms of being able to demystify images. ... With the boys, I think they get it, but I don't think it's very cool to get it." She realized that this had less to do with the teacher-student gender mismatch and more to do with the boys who had been socialized to react in a gender-specific way to such discussions. Her insight allowed her to push lessons a little further than some other teachers felt they could. She used the Columbine incident to expose the fact that violence is the way boys sometimes express themselves. "Instead of crying tears, boys cry bullets." The inherent sadness of this comment prompted further discussion and convinced the boys they should continue the discussion. This teacher believed that single gender education should provide *both* boys and girls the opportunity to develop "a sense of self."

One more veteran woman teacher who had encountered discrimination as a woman scientist prior to becoming a teacher explained her experiences to her students. She discussed the challenges they might face as women in other professions: "We talk about what the statistics are. Female lawyers have three times the miscarriage rate that other working professionals have. That's a fact. That's stress. You're going to be a partner, well, how are you going to do that and take time off?" It was unclear to us whether these discussions resulted in girls feeling scared off from professional careers, or gaining a better understanding of possible challenges. Another teacher who had herself attended an all-women's college took a different approach to career awareness, telling her female students that despite their troubled family circumstances and community expectations for prescribed gender roles, they could do more. They could go to college and have careers and could become empowered by their own knowledge.

It would be an overgeneralization to suggest that all female teachers felt their role was to inform girls about gender inequity or to push them to challenge traditional gender roles. One teacher in a rural community explained that while the teachers did acquaint their students with college opportunities, they suspected that their students would follow in their parents' footsteps and assume whatever jobs are available in the area. For the girls, this might mean becoming a beautician, working in a local business, or doing farm work. Jobs and careers would not necessarily be emancipatory but rather, would allow them to survive. For the boys, it meant they would more likely assume jobs traditionally held by men: "I could see a lot of the kids ending up [picking] potatoes." The boys were expected to follow after their dads who in this community are mostly "farm laborers." We

seldom heard any female or male teacher speak to boys about breaking out of stereotypically male roles. It was expected that the girls, on the other hand, out of necessity would take whatever job was available to them.

For the most part, male teachers did not discuss gender issues at all. They typically did not address the issue of sexism and they tended not to have gender equity as an expressed goal of their classes. One exception was a male teacher who said he grew up in a home with anti-sexist parents; he said he talked with his male students about off-color language being a form of sexual harassment or sexism. He felt that single gender classes allowed him to address these issues with students, whereas coeducational settings did not lend themselves as easily to such discussions.

Most often, if male teachers had discussions about gender in society, which was seldom, these discussions tended to be only with boys (not with girls) and focused on how to be productive adult males, which reflected rather traditional conceptions of gender roles. Discussing the conversations he had with the boys in his class, one male teacher stated:

> We talked about strength, and we talked about self-control and being able to control your emotions and making sacrifices for others. You know we talked about if you have a family and you only have enough money for two cheeseburgers, you're not going to eat. You know that's going to be expected. You know you're going to feed your wife and your kids and you wait. And they go, 'Why?' I said, 'Well trust me. Because you're the stronger one. And that's how it's perceived. You know right or wrong that's how our society is.'

Generally speaking, we found that enlightenment about societal gender roles (and a deconstruction of traditional roles) took place more frequently in classes in the girls' academies than in the boys' academies. Even then, they did not occur too often. In the boys' academies, traditional gender roles appeared to be perpetuated. Besides the obvious barrier to gender equity, such an omission disadvantages boys as well, who struggle to fit an image of maleness that may not be their own. Kruse (1996) argues that teachers concerned with sexism should deal with boys, with their gender identity, and with their concepts of masculinity: "Focusing only on girls will result in imposing on them the whole responsibility for change, and it will underpin the assumption that 'boys are boys' and therefore cannot change" (p. 179). In general, raising awareness of sexism was not a goal of the policymakers who established or implemented the single gender schooling legislation, nor was it a goal of many of the educators and administrators in the schools.

In many cases, teachers in the single gender academies interacted in powerful ways with their students (both boys and girls) to impart attitudes and beliefs about life in general as men and women. Without the presence of the opposite sex, some teachers (male and female) realized that they were able to have the kinds of conversations with their students that were essential for their students' well-being. We found that when teachers were so inclined, the setting also allowed a space to address gender equity. Such discussions occurred mostly with women. Most of the male teachers either avoided discussing gender issues or supported traditional gender roles.

THE INFLUENCE OF SINGLE GENDER EDUCATION ON STUDENTS' ARTICULATIONS OF GENDER

Given our findings about how educators' gendered beliefs and practices influenced the implementation of the single gender academies, we wondered how students' understandings of gender might be reinforced or challenged. How would gender separation and teachers' messages and instructional practices shape students' gender identities and the ways in which gender shaped their lives? In general, we found that the physical design (separating kids by gender, but keeping them on same campus) and/or the fact that teachers taught both boys and girls in most of the single gender academies actually served to create and maintain theories of gender. These arrangements allowed teachers to constantly compare boys and girls, which led to a dichotomous understanding of gender. The single gender setting allowed for teachers and students to discuss gender issues in ways that strengthened students' gender identities, while simultaneously limiting their definitions of masculinity and femininity.

On the one hand, the structure of the SGAs allowed students to see boys and girls experiences as identical, based on the legal requirement that the academies have equal resources. As students explain: "Supposedly they have like the same program for both the boys and the girls. They teach us exactly the same thing ...It has to be equal otherwise the government will shut it down." Yet the same structure which served to mediate differences between girls and boys also acted to heighten those differences through physical separation. A girl explained:

> They're so like obsessed with not mixing the genders here. It's like if a guy is in like the waiting room, and we go out there, [the teachers yell] "get back in class, get back in the class." ...Like I can't even talk to him, and I was outside school, so it doesn't matter, I don't think it should matter.

Students at single gender academies where separation was most strictly enforced often exaggerated the real need or necessity to separate boys and girls.

The physical separation of boys and girls also led to a heightened awareness of gender as a category to define students. Teachers who taught in both academies made comparisons between the academic performance and behavior of boys and girls, often to the dismay of students: One girl claimed that the teachers were "always comparing us to the guys." Another female student concurred. "I mean why she's comparing us to - if we're better at all these things and they're better at PE, I mean shouldn't she be happy or something?" Male students were equally as dismayed by the comparisons. As one boy stated: "And also like Ms. Morris always comparing us with the girls. ...She's always talking about how the girls did this and we didn't do that." Another boy explained: "We don't like that, just let us go the way we're going, and which, if we're bad one day, we might be good the next day." Students could not understand why their teachers insist on setting up comparisons that created unnecessary competition between the sexes and did not allow for complexity within boys and within girls.

At one school, a teacher called a meeting to tell the boys "how bad we are and that they're [the girls] doing a lot better than we are. ...He was telling us that we have to get on the ball to keep up with the girls." Comparisons between girls and boys not only

reinforced the assumption that boys and girls are inherently different, but also set up a dichotomy where girls were always "good" and boys were always "bad." When asked why girls have negative impressions of boys, they reply, " 'cause that's what the teachers tell us." A potentially promising discussion of domestic violence at one school led boys to the conclusion that men are simply "assholes," with little shift in attitude or understanding of power relations:

> Int: And what does that teach you about gender relations? Not to hit a girl?
> Boy: That men are assholes. Most of them anyway.

Indeed, constructions of masculinity were rarely challenged in the academies; men and boys were consistently portrayed as tough, "rowdy," and most importantly, not girls or women. When we asked boys whether their teachers talk about what it means to "be a good man," several students in one academy reiterated their teacher's lesson about the need to be strong and give up food for their family. One boy explained: "Like he told us a story once that if you have 20 cents with you and all of your family is hungry, you should buy it for your kids first, your wife and your kids, because you're the guy and you're bigger than them."

Definitions of being a man include the assumption that men are the primary wage earner, as well as the assumption that men are stronger than women. Teachers enacted these beliefs through differential classroom management styles for boys and girls. Discussing a teacher, one male student explained: "He favors the girls maybe a little bit more. He says, 'well, girls are always real talkative so I have to like ease up on them a little bit.' But the guys, he has to be strict and teach us the basic things in life 'cause we're gonna be the ones going out and getting jobs and providing..." Students readily accepted this pedagogy as a necessary step to becoming men:

> Boy1: Because he's harder on us. As a guy he said if we're going to be men we've got to be treated like men....
> Boy 1: A man can't grow up being a girl. You've got to be like a man.
> Boy 2: He said if you're going to be a man you've got to do all your work. You have to take care of business.
> Boy 1: You've got to take good care of your woman. Get a house and get a job.

Masculinity was defined in terms of financial and emotional strength, and most notably, in opposition to femininity.

While the messages about masculinity were quite limited, messages about what it means to be a woman held greater complexity. Girls and boys were told that women can do anything they want, following the assumption that the purpose of single gender education is to boost girls' self-confidence. However, girls were also made aware of the restrictions on their behavior, enforced through expectations about clothing and appearance as well as their experiences with sexual harassment. Messages about femininity are complicated and create a situation where girls' lived experiences do not always fit within a world that tells them they can do anything.

It is precisely at this intersection, as girls struggle to reconcile the realities of their world with their belief that individual effort will prevail, that we can understand girls' articulations of gender. Our interviews often included a discussion of future career goals. We asked girls whether any obstacles, including race and gender, stood in their

path. Student responses to such questions were consistently individualistic; they either saw no limitations, or they insisted that any gender or racial bias could be overcome through individual perseverance:

> Int: Do you think there's anything in society that might stop you, any obstacles?
> Girl: There's nothing that really could stop me of achieving my goals.
> Int: Your being a woman?
> Girl: Um, its more up to me, if I want to achieve it or not, because its my choice…

Significantly, the girls with the strongest awareness of racism and sexism attended the most diverse urban schools. These students were able to articulate how gender and race may influence their lives: "Most people, …they'll be like, oh well, since she's a girl, she can't do it or if because I'm half Black, oh since she's half Black, she's not gonna be able to make it, you know, because of her race, you know, that's how it would be." When asked how she might overcome such assumptions, this student simply replied, "Cause you prove it." Indeed, it is not so much that these students were unaware of sexism and racism, but as one girl said, "I don't really think I'll let that stop me." For the most part, they saw limitations as individual experiences, not as patterns of social structures.

Consistent with Phillips' (2000, p. 3) recent study of young women's experiences of harassment and violence, these girls are eager to "believe in their own agency, …seeing agency and victimization as mutually exclusive." The danger, of course, is that girls are being told they can accomplish anything, with little practical advice to overcome hardships beyond "just show the world." Any efforts to empower students must be mitigated with a critical analysis of systems of oppression and an understanding of the challenges they may face on the path to their dreams.

Our interviews and observations of the single gender academies often revealed definitions of gender that were either limited, as was the case with masculinity, or unrealistic, as was heard in messages about femininity. Gender was constructed as a dichotomous entity within the single gender academies, promoting a paradigm of girls as good, boys as bad. As Bailey (1996, p. 76) warns,

> Removing girls from classes in order to provide better learning opportunities for them can imply that girls and boys are so different that they must be taught in radically different ways. When all-girl classes are set up… an underlying, if unintended, message can be that girls are less capable. …Separating boys from girls in order to better control boys' behavior can indicate that boys are "too wild" to control.

Such divisions are neither productive nor empowering for boys and girls. If we want to create a truly equitable educational environment, we might be wise to take our cue from students. Student interviews revealed enormous complexity in their understanding of gender. Their understandings reflected a reproduction of essentialized definitions of gender (i.e., finding it difficult to move away from a conception of gender as solely a biological construct), while simultaneously insisting on the fluidity of gender and the universality of boys' and girls' experiences. Significantly, despite structural factors that insisted on boys' and girls' differences, many students articulated a theory of gender that moved beyond oversimplification:

> You can't blame it on genders, like girls are smarter than guys because that's not true. There are girls that are smarter than guys, but there are guys that are smarter than girls. So it's on the person, whatever you want to come and learn, you come and learn.

Rather than perpetuating myths that boys and girls are inherently different and therefore can never be expected to get along, our findings point to the need for educators to cultivate adolescents' awareness of the enormous overlap between boys and girls as well as the diverse range of experiences among boys and among girls.

School Organization and Student Distractions

As we explained in prior sections, the belief that single gender arrangements would reduce distractions was a commonly held assumption throughout all the schools and was echoed by administrators, teachers, and parents. Indeed, limiting interactions with the opposite sex served as the method by which each district hoped to address the problems unique to its student population. Whether the issue was low self-esteem, truancy, or disruptive behavior, it was believed that the separation of boys and girls might act as a cure-all.

The adults involved in the California single gender academies defined distractions primarily in terms of sexual interest, claiming that the middle and high school years were a time of "raging hormones" for girls and boys. The guiding belief was that adolescents are primarily distracted by the pressures of romantic and sexual relations. While we certainly found this to be true in many cases, incidents of distraction also included academic cheating, disciplinary problems, and sexual harassment.

What then was the impact of the single gender arrangement on incidents of distraction in the classroom? Was this one possible vehicle for gender equity? Many students found that the all-girls and all-boys environments allowed them to focus more on their work with less interruption. Both boys and girls admitted that they were more academically productive without the presence of the opposite sex. Students found relief from some of the teasing and efforts to gain attention, often described as "flirting" or "showing off." As a teacher at one school explained:

> For boys I think the main benefit is that it really does reduce distractions. These are kids who have trouble focusing on school work in the first place, but then when you have guys in the classroom, they usually have to maintain what I call is the double image. Image number one is for their homeys, or their male friends, who they want to seem like they're cool, like they don't give a crap, like they can just do what they want to do, nobody's gonna put them in check, as they say, "nobody's gonna control them." So they have that kind of bravado to keep up. And then when you have girls, there's another image that you want to be cool for the girls, you know, you want to impress a girl, you want to go out with her. So when you put the kinds of kids that we deal with into a setting where one of those

distractions is removed, you already have a better chance at getting to them to focus on their work.

Several teachers noted how the single gender setting dissuaded boys' efforts to show off, act out, or display forms of aggressive behavior. Likewise, girls who did not have boys present did not have to vie for their attention.

For many girls we interviewed, the single gender classrooms were a safe haven from distractions in the form of sexual harassment and a chance to concentrate on their academic work. They complained that it was "annoying" and although they told the boys to "shut up" they were made to feel "embarrassed." The girls felt they could only ignore them for so long and "then it gets to the point where they [the boys] keep doing it, you just can't get them to stop..." Girls who attended single gender schools on the same campus and at the same time as boys admitted that the harassment, including whistling and unwanted advances, occurred during lunch breaks and in the hallways as they changed classes: "Sometimes they just look at some girls, the way girls don't want to be looked at." In only a few instances did boys mention being harassed by girls, including hitting and teasing.

While some distractions were sexual in nature, others differed from what many adults had assumed. A significant theme among the girls was that they were no longer distracted by boys trying to copy off their work. The boys, in turn, admitted to this practice and actually said that they missed not having girls do the work for them. Girls also noticed that a single sex classroom meant fewer interruptions to discipline the boys, which took time away from their work in a coed class, "because they'd always have to tell the boys to stop." The discourse of distraction, which provided justification for the SGAs, is an incomplete understanding of how kids disrupt each other, academically and socially. Adults' tendency to sexualize the experiences of adolescents may in fact cause them to overlook the other types of distraction and harassment that exist in single gender and coed settings alike.

The single gender academies led to a rather unexpected form of harassment for both boys and girls across all sites. Students consistently complained about the teasing that they experienced. In some cases, their non-academy peers were jealous of the additional resources, such as computers and field trips, available to them. Derogatory comments included being called "preppy" or "snotty." The fear of being considered "preppy" was most acutely heard at one academy where socioeconomic class was commonly used as a marker of identity for students. The slightest difference in wealth made one stand out, and students resented the increased attention brought on by the additional resources. Single gender academy students were also labeled as "bad" kids, particularly because most of the schools targeted "at-risk" students.

The most significant form of teasing came in the form of homophobic comments, following the assumption that enrollment in a single gender academy either meant a student was gay or posed the threat of "becoming" gay. Students at one academy explained that it is the uniqueness of public single sex schools and the fact that students actively chose to enroll that led to the assumption of homosexuality. Being gay (or perceived as gay) was seen by students as an insult, something to be avoided at all costs. This is consistent with prior research conducted in coeducational schools (Friend, 1993).

Most teachers did little to address the repercussions of homophobic comments, simply telling students to ignore the teasing. Just as many teachers avoided discussions of gender bias, teachers also avoided opportunities to engage students in discussions of sexuality, allowing homophobia to persist unchallenged. This was most evident in a group interview we conducted with male students at one school. Students clung to their own sexual insecurities and struck out at their classmates who were brave enough to challenge stereotypes of what it means to be a "man" or a "woman."

Overall, it would appear that the single gender design did serve its goal of eliminating classroom distractions, particularly for the girls. However, it is important to note several contradictory issues that illustrate the complexity of student experiences. The same girls who enjoyed the freedom from boys who harassed them or cheated off them found different types of distraction in the all-girls classrooms. Many girls complained about noisy female peers, noting an increase in girls' talking in the single gender academies. In a sense, some girls took over the role of noisemaker, causing as much trouble as the boys typically did. Girls also experienced a new type of harassment with heightened competition around issues of popularity. Incidents of fighting among girls did not necessarily improve in single gender settings; where girls said they used to fight over boys in coed settings, they now fought over issues of friendship, gossiping about each other. Many boys noted a similar increase in teasing and disruptive behavior without the girls to act as a "buffer." Finally, while many boys found the single gender classroom to be a more productive work environment, just as many boys said they were more "inspired" to achieve academic success in the presence of girls.

Decidedly, the single gender setting created an academic environment that eliminated certain distractions from the opposite sex and thus allowed many students to become more academically focused. However, it is important to understand that the absence of the other gender is not an isolated factor in the elimination of distractions. Students recognized that there will always be some amount of distraction, regardless of separation by sex: "I think that it doesn't matter what their sex is, there's always gonna be girls that play around and there's always gonna be guys that clown off, it doesn't really matter if you're a girl or a guy." Many students felt that other factors, including smaller class size and increased teacher attention, had greater influence in the success of classroom management in the single gender classroom.

Perhaps more than any other form of distraction, the issue of sexual harassment remains a significant concern and cannot be eliminated simply by separating boys and girls. While certainly not all boys are involved in harassment, sexual harassment was a common event in the lives of students at each of the SGAs. Our findings about harassment are quite consistent with investigations of sexual harassment among students in coeducational school settings. A study entitled *Hostile Hallways* found that "Sixty-five percent of the girls surveyed [by AAUW] had been touched, grabbed, or pinched in a sexual manner" (AAUW, 1993, p. 8). While the single gender classrooms may have provided some reprieve, they did little to change attitudes or behaviors.

For girls in particular, coeducational spaces were still a place of discomfort, where seemingly harmless flirting may turn into sexual harassment: "I mean you like him looking at you, but I mean not so daring..." Many of the girls we interviewed told us that the boys harass "'cause they like you," interpreting their behavior either as flirting or simply as an aspect of boys' nature, the familiar "boys will be boys" excuse. Perhaps most revealing in our conversations with girls was their feeling that efforts to stop the

harassment were largely unsuccessful. On an institutional level, students felt that teachers and administrators did little to stop the harassment, often simply telling girls to ignore it. On a personal level, girls at one SGA told us that the repercussions for talking back to the boys were far worse than simply putting up with the harassment: "Cause they're scared that the boy might say...call them a name or something that's disrespectful," or worse, the harassment may continue beyond school: "Yeah, like something big will happen if you walk down your street, you might see them, they might do something badder, badder than what they did over here."

When we asked boys about harassment, most boys were aware that such behavior was inappropriate and, in most cases, in violation of school policy. Unfortunately, the lesson some boys took from this awareness was not necessarily that girls deserved respect, but simply that harassing behavior meant "they'll get in trouble." If schools are going to address the problem of harassment, strong messages need to be disseminated to all students that explain in specific terms why certain behaviors are wrong. At only one school, did we observe or hear about any efforts of this type. In this case, a teacher taught a rather effective lesson on sexual harassment as part of the district curriculum, and students role-played incidents that might or might not be considered harassment.

In general, while separate classrooms may have provided a temporary solution to many distractions, they did little to foster healthier behaviors between boys and girls or change student attitudes about the opposite sex. Disciplining boys and empowering girls in isolation is not the answer, if our goal is better understanding and respect across this often-wide gender divide. If adults are indeed concerned about improving coed relations, the solution lies in creating safe spaces for boys and girls to interact. Those spaces may have less to with the gender composition of the classroom and more to do with a building respect and community among teachers and students.

THE CHALLENGES OF IMPLEMENTING AND SUSTAINING PUBLIC SINGLE GENDER ACADEMIES

In the sections above, we noted numerous ways in which the implementation of the single gender academies fell short of ideals. Undoubtedly, some aspects of implementation, such as the vision for gender equity, student and teacher recruitment, professional development, could be improved upon with careful planning. And, in fact there were some positive aspects to the single gender arrangement. But even so, can the public education system in the U.S. sustain single gender academies of the type we observed? Four of the six districts closed their academies right after the grant funding ended, only surviving two years. Palm, which had received their grant about three months later than the other schools, survived a little longer, limping along for an additional six months without funding to finish out the school year. Today, only the Pine single gender academies remain open. Understanding the reasons behind the relatively short life span of the single gender academies offers implications for educators and policy makers.

Through a series of political actions at the state level – and mostly due to the end of the Governor's term – the single gender academies did not receive the additional funding that they were expecting the second year. The loss of funding clearly influenced the

closure of the schools. But even before their closure, the academies had lost status in their districts. District superintendents essentially used the lack of state funding as an excuse to close the academies, making it clear that financial motivations had contributed to their opening. Although teachers, parents, and students strongly supported the academies, their voices were ignored. Some students felt betrayed and many teachers worried whether they would be able to find new jobs. The single gender schooling experiment suffered from an absence of strong theory on the part of state and district officials as to why such an arrangement was beneficial for both and girls. Overall, the series of events that led to the closure of the single gender academies was not simply financial. It was about priorities, politics, changes in leadership, and ideological commitments.

There is an unspoken assumption that the lessons or results gained from single gender private schools will translate into public single gender schools. In reality, the schools we studied were very different from their private single gender school counterparts. We found a number of factors that made implementing and sustaining the single gender academies quite complicated and beyond the realm of what might occur in the private sector. In this section we describe some of the challenges that the public single gender schools faced as they struggled to survive.

Power and Politics

Without a doubt, power and politics at the state level is of strategic importance to educational change. "The state is not a thing, system, or subject but a significantly unbounded terrain of powers and techniques, an ensemble of discourses, rules and practices, cohabiting in limited, tension-ridden, often contradictory relation with each other" (Blackmore, 1999, p. 39). Just as actions at the state level had shaped events that led to the adoption and implementation of the single gender schools, the state played a role in their closure. Some school and district administrators blamed the state for the downfall of the academies. The state's impact was unequivocally about funding, but it was also from the beginning very much about power and politics at both the state and the local levels.

According to those who helped write the initial single gender academies Request for Proposals (RFP), there was a major flaw in the drafting of the document, which led to some confusion among administrators as to how long the schools would be funded. While the state never guaranteed there would be any more money after the first $500,000, a state official explained:

> The fact that they put in a one-year budget on a two-year program was the hook on which they [the districts] assumed there would be a second year. They wrote the *grant* for two years but they wrote a budget for one. And then it got accepted that way. No one ever cleaned that up.... I don't think anybody realized the discrepancy there.

The state had assumed that schools would institutionalize the program the first year and then the second year they would pay for it out of their own money if their needs could not be met by average daily attendance (ADA) funding. School administrators clearly expected the arrangement to be different. In fact, administrators had been told that the

$2 million that was left over (because only six districts were funded rather than ten) would be divided among them to support the upkeep of their programs. Faced with no more money, some administrators argued their case in front of the legislature, but the legislature would not grant this additional funding. A state administrator explained the reason:

> That's not what the money was intended for. It was the Department of Finance that came out with the position that that two million dollars couldn't be given to the existing program because the language said it was for start up. It was for new programs. So they wouldn't give any more money [to the existing single gender academies]. So all they were going to get according to the legislation was their original five hundred thousand.

Support for single gender schooling at the state level was always questionable. One state official explained that events were clearly political:

> The Democrats as a caucus opposed it. They'd only bought off on it in '96 because they weren't going to hold up a budget over five million dollars for that. They gave the governor his little piece. There had never been a legislative hearing on the validity of the program, and had it gone through as a straight policy issue. It either would not have passed or it would have passed by a very small margin because you would have had people raising the argument that this deflects from our need to deal with all classrooms.

Whether state politicians were actually worried over best educational practice, equity for all students, and/or partisan concerns, single gender schooling did not have state support. One district superintendent explained:

> Everybody needed blame on this... everybody should have had their eyes on that money, but the Senate did it [cut the funding] on the basis of an AAUW report that bad been printed in the Sacramento Bee the day before. And it was a pretty innocuous report. It frankly wasn't opposing gender academies. It was bland, but they used that as the vehicle to cut it out. And I believe the Senate cut it out purely on the basis that it was a Republican governor's proposal, and that the Democratic Senate was not going to let that survive at all because they believed that they were going to win the next governorship, as a Democrat. And they were right.... So I considered it to be nothing more than a political partisan cut. That was it.

According to this administrator, the demise of the single gender academies was directly related to political agendas.

As the above comment suggests, how research was used to support particular positions at different points in time was quite interesting. At the initiation of the single gender academies experiment, educators and politicians used research to support their position on single gender schooling. When the legislation was adopted, Wilson and the educators who started the schools felt there was sufficient evidence to support such a move. They specifically pointed to reports, including *How Schools Shortchange Girls* (AAUW, 1992) suggesting girls are disadvantaged in coeducational settings. This support occurred despite the conflicting body of evidence surrounding single gender schooling.

Later, when the political climate changed and Wilson was on his way out of office, the legislature complained that they were not interested in continuing the program because "there was no information that showed that it worked," explained a state policymaker. As the superintendent described above, they pointed to the AAUW (1998a) report, *Separated by Sex*, which they interpreted as providing negative evidence against single gender schools. According to a state policymaker, those opposed to the academies argued that, "there should be more substance behind the program before you start throwing money out to little special things without having any inkling as to whether or not this is a good thing."

While commitment to reforms related to gender is generally not strong in the public sector (Marshall, 1997), we found pockets of support for single gender education from educators, parents and students. These supporters, however, were ineffectual in retaining their schools because they were forced to challenge the power brokers at the district and state level. Teachers at the schools felt impotent, despite their strong advocacy to keep the schools open. In our final visit to one district and one week before the single gender academies' doors were closed, teachers expressed being scared, angry and sad. One teacher was clearly distraught at the events that led to the final closing of the schools:

> I mean it's just been very bad. Like a shipwreck... You don't know what's going to happen with the school ... and with yourself as well. You don't know where you're going to be placed. So everybody [is] very much kind of on shaky ground. And you see things going on and you're like, "Why is that person getting promoted? Why is that person being taken? Why is that person being taken?" You know. And I think the students have been hurt and they don't understand what's really happening.

Students were also very upset. One student told us that she used to hate coming to school until she attended the single gender academy. She cried as she tried to make sense as to why the administration was doing this to her. Boys and girls at some schools wrote letters of protest to district administrators and state legislators when they were told the academies would close.

Some parents were outraged too when the decision was made to close their academies, but they felt their voices were silenced. In an interview with a focus group of parents at one school, one parent claimed, "It didn't matter what we thought." Parents at another school felt they had no voice in the decision. While they claimed strong support for continuing the girls' academy, they admitted they lacked power. The district superintendent disagreed. He pointed to a low rate of return on a survey that was disseminated to parents to determine interest in returning to the single gender academies. He cited low attendance by parents at a board meeting that was held to decide the fate of the academies. On the other hand, parents claimed they never really had an opportunity to speak their mind because decisions had already been made to close the schools. District gestures were seen as merely symbolic. The principal explained that in the face of other competing demands in public education (e.g., literacy, high stakes accountability), this gender-based reform was simply not a priority for policymakers and administrators, and thus there was little motivation on the part of the district to continue.

The lack of attentiveness to parents' wishes is striking as we compare it to events at a much larger public single gender middle school in California that was started without the benefit of the state grant. Here, we found that parents had much more power and were actually pointed to as the reason for the adoption of a single gender arrangement. This school is in its second year of implementation and shows no signs of closing. In contrast, the fate of the public single gender schools in this study were at the hands of both state and district officials who seemed non-responsive to the demands of local parents, instead, acting according to their own political agendas. Power and politics were major factors in the life and death of these schools.

District Imperatives Compete for Support

As the above discussion reveals, district support was key to the survival of the single gender academies and yet except for the Pine academies, once the grant ended, superintendents did not rally behind the schools. (Pine's sustainability will be discussed below.) Some superintendents insisted that the schools were ending because there simply wasn't enough money to continue, but many teachers and parents disagreed with that assessment.

In one district, parents blamed the closure of the schools on the superintendent's lack of commitment to the district, in general and the single gender schools in particular. They described their superintendent as an "outsider" and "arrogant," "someone who throws his title around." The superintendent described the community as a "not an enlightened spot" and "very provincial." Clearly, there was a lack of mutual respect. The parents saw the superintendent as someone who did not have the interests of their community or their children in mind because he did not support the academies. He admitted that his concerns were centered on the district as a whole, not the single gender schools because the district was "not healthy." In a climate that increasingly values accountability as measured by high test scores, this superintendent along with the many others in our study felt pressured to strategize allocation of time and resources. The superintendent was forced to reassign students to various buildings and classrooms that did not always accommodate the organizational constraints of separating students by gender.

Educators in the other districts also worried substantially about losing ADA funds. Since several of the academies educated a highly truant population of students, low attendance translated into less ADA. It was a formidable task to keep students coming to school. They were also continually challenged in their attempts to enroll new students because parents were concerned about sending their children to school with an identifiable high-risk population of students. Educators in other districts claimed that low ADA accounted for the closing of their academies. One district administrator lamented over the inherent financial problem caused by low female attendance in alternative education schools:

> Sure, it's a matter of ADA. It's a matter of student attendance based upon the expenses of the site. And, as you know, that site has never had the number of girls that they hoped to have. And because of those issues, there's a financial problem, and so the grant has allowed that to work, but when the grant runs out

> we'll have to... look very carefully at whether we can continue to run things under the current format. The data that I have indicates that we can't.

With competing district demands, most superintendents were reluctant to offer their support for the single gender academies, thus threatening the academies' sustainability.

Absence of a Theory of Single Gender Education

The sustainability of the single gender schools was also undermined by some district administrators who lacked a clear theory for and commitment to single gender schooling. As we explained, most district administrators were attracted largely to the funding and not to single gender education, and they did not have philosophical or academic reasons for continuing the single gender academies. One coordinator of the single gender academies who was hired one year after the grant was funded clearly felt disappointed when she learned that district support only followed money and not "concept." She stated, "I put so much time and energy into this program and to hear that the district only did it for money and not for the concept is like, "What am I doing all this work for? If it's not going to be here in a year, why bother?" As this educator realized, without a theory as to why to implement the single gender arrangement, district superintendents were quick to withdraw their support and left others to ponder their own effort and commitment.

One district administrator admitted that the new school administrators (as well as himself) were not very committed to single gender at all and would push for a return to coeducation. Another administrator in the same district articulated his opinions about single gender education and school choice:

> Single gender, in and of [itself]...from that standpoint, it doesn't fit into my vision. The site fits into my vision of creating magnet schools that are built upon the interest, the orientation and the ability of students. I would like to be able to have sites that appeal to kids based upon "this is what I'm good at, this is what I'm interested in." Great, we have a place for you to go. So from that standpoint it doesn't. From the standpoint of having segregated classes, that doesn't fit into my vision at this point in time.

These administrators believed that individuals had been the driving force behind the single gender academies, specifically their former principal who was a charismatic leader. When she left, so too did her vision. "If you don't have the same person with the same passion, they don't have the same interest and the same option.... And that's a problem for all of educators, they're not driven by research, they're driven by personalities, by interests."

Decidedly, there was disagreement as to the validity of even implementing single gender schools. One district official deliberated out loud as to why there was a need for single gender schooling at all:

> There seems to be a common misconception that girls are not successful in math and science, and that's truly not the case. If we really examine our statistics and our grade point averages in isolated subject areas in higher level math and

> higher level science, you'll find female students succeeding at very significant levels, and participating. But nonetheless, you know, there is that kind of stereotype perception out there.

A commitment to (much less a theory for) single gender education was not evident among the administrators and educators who joined the single gender academies after their original founding. One school lost its founder and first principal after the first year, only to be followed by a steady stream of successors who were non-supportive of the concept of single gender schooling. Reflecting on the "death" of her schools and her vision, the founding principal stated, "It's hard for those teachers. It's hard for those kids. It's hard for me. It's kind of my baby. I didn't just give it up for adoption. They killed it, tortured it, murdered it, cut it up bit by bit into pieces." Educators at the site suggested that there was a "a paradigm shift" after the principal was replaced. "They went from the dream that [the original principal] had to the reality of the beast. What's available, what can be done, and how [do] you go from here...." It was an ideology that dealt with the pragmatic side of things and focused on just getting the students educated in anyway that worked. There was no loyalty, no rationale, no understanding as to why the single gender arrangement was better than any other strategy.

When educators, parents, and students *do* have a strong theory about the purpose of single gender education, single gender schools are more likely to survive. Private, single sex schools often have a mission and purpose that is readily identifiable, although admittedly not always oriented towards gender equity (exceptions include all-male military academies and all-girls finishing schools). Public schools commonly do not have a sense of shared mission, purpose, and history that is characteristic of private schools (Persell and Cookson, 1985). We did find, however, what we believe was a strong theory guiding education at an all-girls public high school in the eastern United States. This school was founded in the mid 1800's and for over 100 years has maintained its single sex status, as well as its reputation as an excellent public school in an urban district. The school's enormous pride in its traditions continues to shape everyday practices at the school. The school's strong alumni include the principal and many teachers and parents at the school, all of whom help to preserve the mission of single gender education. As the principal explained, "the tradition, the history, the fact that it has been established for such a long period of time... and I would venture to say that if there was a campaign to [become coed] there would be a public outcry against it."

The principal attributes the "strong school climate" to its single sex status, "because we realize that's what makes us unique, and all of the things that we do here basically hinge upon...the fact that this is a female, all female school." At the same time, she recognizes the tenuous existence of single gender education within the public school system: "While we are advocating that we are unique, at the same time we know that we have to keep a very low profile because we don't want to draw a lot of attention to ourselves." The school takes enormous pride in its traditions, which continue to shape everyday practices at the school. One of the main themes of the school is "quiet dignity", and while some might argue that this principle may be in opposition to the goal of empowerment for young women, administrators believe it creates a distinct quality of respect in and out of the classroom. Most students chose the school for its reputation of academic excellence, although several students were encouraged by their mothers, aunts, and grandmothers who had attended the school in the past and valued the opportunity for single gender education. Irrespective of administrative or teacher turnover (which was not frequent) and a changing student population, this school's vision

is passed onto succeeding generations by all those who attend and by an active alumni group in the community.

Unlike the school described above, the single gender academies in our study were without a strong ideological commitment to single gender education. The legislation itself was more concerned with school choice than with single gender schooling. The academies suffered from unstable leadership at the school level and were at the hands of districts that were unwilling to build an infrastructure to support the concept. Any notions of building traditions were lost in the struggle to survive the daily operational challenges of running the schools. Absent of a theory for implementing single gender schooling and plagued with teacher and administrative turnover, the single gender schools were left in a constant state of defending their existence. As a result, it was difficult to sustain support for the schools.

There was one notable exception to the lack of sustainability among the public single gender schools that makes the importance of district support and having a theory for implementing single gender schooling abundantly clear. Pine's single gender academies continue to operate today in the wake of closures of the academies in the other five districts. Their success can be attributed in large measure to the strong support of Pine's superintendent, who was behind the concept of single gender schools long before the California grant was even issued. She had a philosophical belief that this schooling arrangement was important for the students in her district, particularly the boys. She said, "We want boys particularly to know how to be boys. Some of them in this community were having difficulty with that because they were around women a lot; they have no men in the house. You can tell boys who grow up in a household where there are all women." She thought that men would be better served in an all-male environment taught by male teachers:

> They can talk male talk to them. They don't talk like we would talk to them. There's some man-ness, you know. It's a guy thing. And when you're living in a house where there's no Uncle Joe, you know, where there's only, you know, Aunt Mamie and Grandma. And then you come to school and here's a male with a tie.

Governor Wilson's legislation for the single gender schools was inspired by the efforts of the Pine who paved the way for such schools. He called the superintendent "a distinguished educator," who "helped troubled boys in grades 6- 8 learn good study habits and the value of discipline." As we explained, Wilson wanted to help others follow Pine's example and thus included funding in his budget to "open similar ground-breaking single sex academies around the state."

District support in Pine not only inspired the legislation, but was responsible for sustaining their single gender schools after the grant funding ended. The superintendent used the single gender schools as a place to educate most of the district's middle school students who had behavior or academic problems. This relieved the rest of the schools in the district from the challenges that accompany such students and justified a larger than normal monetary investment in the single gender academies. While Pine students benefit from having a district that supports low student/teacher ratios, the director admits that even this generous support is not enough to respond to all of the students' needs. She said they need additional staff on the campus "to really manage the discipline and the safety issues and that's the part that [the Director is] challenged with." Pine

continues to struggle for money. Sustainability is an ongoing challenge, but with strong district support, the Pine single gender schools have been able to survive. In the sustainability of single gender education at Pine and in the failure of the state-funded single gender academies, we see that the role of the district cannot be ignored when we seek to understand the viability of single gender public schools.

PAUCITY OF RESOURCES

Given the power and political actions at the state and district level, and without a clear commitment to and understanding of single gender education, schools found themselves without funds and without support. When funds were not awarded the second year, the situation deteriorated significantly for students. Teaching staffs were reduced and extra programs that dealt specifically with the needs of low-achieving students were cut. Unlike their private single gender school counterparts, these public single gender schools must take all comers. In real terms, this meant that the public single gender schools served a diverse racial, class and linguistic population of students, many of who were at-risk of academic failure. Serving this student population introduced a set of challenges and issues that went beyond the mere separation by sex. The schools were designed to help students who were, for the most part, underachieving academically, and in some cases were two grade levels below the national average. In many cases, they had formerly been tracked in general or remedial classes and teachers had low expectations for their success. Many of the students had been chronically absent or had previously dropped out of school. For the most part, the students were very low income and challenged daily by living in neighborhoods where drug activity and crime prevailed.

As we explained earlier, the money profoundly impacted the founding of these schools. All of the schools in this study were in California, a state where the per-pupil funding level is among the lowest in the U.S. Because resources are scarce in public education, educators behave opportunistically. The educators who applied for the single gender schooling grant saw it as a way of addressing the desperate needs of students in their district. It was imperative that educators have the money to organize their schools in ways that attended to the severe academic as well as social needs of their students. To accomplish this meant that expenditures went beyond the financial interests and/or willingness of public school district administrators.

The initial state funding gave the schools the initial capacity to open, but sustaining high quality programs demanded continuous funding. The state hoped that the schools would use the funding for staff development, materials, and other costs of starting a new program, rather than to pay staff salaries. However, many of the schools used funding for salaries as well, as we explained earlier. This created a serious dilemma when the state funding ran out. Likewise, low student-teacher ratios were costly for districts to sustain without grant funding. The separation of students by gender also demanded space and facilities that were often scarce. Resources such as computers that were purchased with grant funding demanded upkeep, yet the schools lacked the money to pay for their maintenance. In one set of academies, he expensive Sylvan reading program, which provided tutoring in reading, had to be cut because of insufficient funds.

Unlike private single gender schools, these public schools were not recipients of large endowments from wealthy alumni. In contrast to one private all-girls school in southern California, which reports that they typically receive approximately $5-10 million each

year from parents, grandparents, alumni and friends of the school, these public schools were in desperate need of money. Moreover, they did not have a pool of wealthy educated parents to contribute time and resources. Lacking the revenue of tuition and alumni contributions, which can be quite substantial in private schools, the site administrators in these public schools were continuously forced to write grants, which proved time-consuming and unsuccessful. In sum, the lack of a steady stream of money presented an ongoing problem for each of the schools in this study, which needed far more than just ADA funding to maintain their organizational arrangements and special offerings.

In this public school climate where everyone was vying for their fair share of limited funds, single gender schools also lacked support from other educators in their districts who resented what the use of state funds for the SGAs. Non-single gender school educators often put pressure on district superintendents to justify the continuation of the academies. One single gender teacher commented that people in his district thought, "We were spoiled, that we were feeding at the public trough." Although it was pointed out that the technology and other resources at the school were purchased with grant funds, upset teachers wanted to close the school and redistribute the technology to the "more impoverished institutions," namely their schools. This educator claimed that education was all about money. "As long as you have money, you are valued." When the money dried up, educators' motivations and approaches were brought into question in part because of the fierce competition for limited resources in education. Without the accompanying infusion of additional funds, single gender education simply was not a top priority.

Public single gender schools are subject to public accountability and government control. School boards had the power to challenge sustainability. They demanded that district superintendents justify decisions to continue funding the schools once the grant ended. One superintendent said that his school board was insistent that the single gender academies not "create a drain on the general fund. That it would be as self-supporting as everything else is or you can't do it. They didn't want it to be another special education drain." For them, money was an issue and in the end, he said he couldn't defend the expenditures.

NEGATIVE RAMIFICATIONS FOR STUDENTS AND TEACHERS "LEFT BEHIND"

Public schools must educate diverse groups of students, often in a comprehensive school setting. As we alluded to in the section on choice, the establishment of single gender academies in some districts, like other academy or "school within a school" programs or magnet schools, created negative ramifications for the students left behind in the regular, coeducational school setting. For example, in one district parents rightly complained that the establishment of single gender schools siphoned high-achieving students out of the mainstream public schools. Because the single gender classes attracted all of the academically-oriented and motivated students, the coed class on campus was left with predominately low-achieving students with a history of discipline problems. Moreover, the veteran, more qualified teachers were assigned to the coveted single gender classes, leaving the coed class to experience a string of novice inexperienced teachers. In another district where the single gender academies were

designed for the most troubled group of students, area high schools benefited from having their less-motivated students removed from their schools, but the assignment resulted in a retracking of low-achieving students in the single gender academies.

Attendance in the single gender academies often restricted students from taking other academic programs on their campus. At one school, for example, since many of the students were at-risk of academic failure, they may have benefited from participation in special programs on campus such as AVID (Advancement Via Individual Determination) or Puente. Both of these programs are designed to help low income and minority students with their academic and social needs, but because students were enrolled in the academies, they could not take advantage of these beneficial classes. Equally disturbing was the fact that honors and AP classes were not open to the single gender students at this high school. We know that students in private single gender schools are typically offered the most rigorous academic courses, specifically oriented toward getting students prepared for the most competitive college slots. A very different scenario existed within the public single gender schools that may have eventually disadvantaged students in terms of competition for college entrance.

Teacher and Administrative Turnover

Establishing and maintaining a high quality education for students was a major challenge for the single gender public schools, in part because they were unable to attract and retain a high quality staff. Granted, there were a few teachers who saw the single gender academies as a unique opportunity to address students' needs in a new way. This was particularly true for some of the teachers who had girls-only classes. Many teachers were concerned about the discipline problems that would arise in all-boys classes, particularly given the "troublesome" students that many of the schools targeted. In some schools, administrators found it difficult to attract veteran teachers to the academies, as teachers were scared that accepting a position that was funded by a temporary grant might result in unemployment when the money ran out. The assistant principal at one school explained that experienced teachers often said, "I've been here for twenty-five years. I've seen the funding come in; I've seen it go out. If I go out there and I cut the limb off my knee what am I going to be doing? I don't think so."

In order to be in compliance with the legislation and with local teachers' union regulations, teachers could not simply be assigned to teach in the single gender academies. This assistant principal went on to explain:

> [Teacher assignment] had to be voluntary. We couldn't say, 'okay you're in there' because they'd be over to see the union rep. real quick. I guess we could have forced their hand a little bit but if we could have selected the teachers – all the teachers. There were some good ones in the program, don't get me wrong, but I think ...the boys particularly, probably, would have been more successful, [with a better teacher].

Even when schools were fortunate to find good teachers, they typically did not stay long, often citing personal problems as the reason for leaving. The truth was that in numerous schools, the students, particularly the boys, were challenging to teach. The number of original teachers remaining in the single gender academies was disappointingly low as illustrated in the table below.

Table 1: Single Gender Academies Teacher Turnover

District	No. of Original Teachers	No. of Original Teachers Remaining by 2nd or 3rd year of operation
Palm	5	1
Evergreen	5	3
Cactus	4	1
Birch	7	2
Pine	8	1
Oak	6	2

Teacher turnover created dire consequences for those whose lives were already plagued by instability and added to students' feelings of confusion and anomie. In some cases, students complained that they never knew who their teacher would be because they frequently had substitutes. Even when they had permanent teachers, they were often new, inexperienced and frequently unknowledgeable about working with at-risk youth. Several schools placed inexperienced Teach for America candidates who lacked teaching credentials into the academies. These teachers were not given a choice, and while clearly committed and academically qualified individuals, they often lacked the teaching experience and training to deal effectively with some students. In the absence of expert teachers, some students struggled academically. At one school, administrators sought district approval to offer higher salaries to attract better teachers, but doing so financially impacted their districts and resulted in resentment and disapproval from other schools.

It was common for the single gender academies to have frequent administrator turnover as well. Three of the six schools experienced turnover in the principalship during the two or three-year operation of the single gender academies. One site had three principals in three years, and only interim superintendents at the district level during that same time. Another site had a remarkable turnover of six principals in three years. A teacher at the site was demoralized by the turnover: "It's just not stable enough. I don't know what happens in the higher management but it's just not stable." A teacher at one of the academies described the change in atmosphere in his school when the new and final school administration took over:

> They had a completely different attitude about how the school should be run. And it was more a generic kind of [attitude]. [They thought it should be run] like any alternative correctional education school should be run. Three people who were very much anti-anything that this place stood for coming in to try to take it over. So it was like a corporate hostile take over. There was a newer paradigm that was replacing ours that was based on an efficiency model. Let's get through the day. The other one [the one we used] took a lot of personal, spiritual effort to try to insert, induce, inculcate, infuse the curriculum. And so therefore, it was more work. I will say what I've noticed lately is that when it comes down to a choice between human beings and property, I think there's a tendency to [value] the property.

By all accounts, the new administration at this teacher's school could not wait to close the school, disperse the resources to other schools and assume new administrative positions in schools that were run in a more traditional way. These administrators lacked a commitment to single gender schooling. As one administrator quipped "there are bigger fish to fry."

Changes in administration created difficulties for all of the schools, even in those in which there was not a principal change. In two of the three schools that had stable principal leadership, the directorship of the single gender academies changed after the first year of operation. In both cases, the leadership of the academies changed from young white males with some administrative experience, credibility, and a rapport with the staff to African-American women who were new to the schools and who had not formerly held administrative posts. For example, the enthusiastic grant writer, founder and principal of one of the academies (and the school as a whole) found the administration of the academies too time consuming and in the second year used funds to hire a director. Due to budget constraints in the school district, she was required to spend 50% of her time as a counselor at a nearby elementary school. This part time situation coupled with her lack of history in working with the school staff affected the amount of attention she was able to devote to the academies.

Legal Issues in Public Single Gender Education

The sustainability of the public single gender academies was also threatened by the prospect of Title IX complaints against single gender public schools. Feeling somewhat protected under the grant, administrators began worrying when they no longer had the state defending the existence of their schools. As one educator stated, "You know, frankly, we could always point to the Sacramento initiative that was born here. It was an initiative that was born in the state." Districts became scared, however, when the safety umbrella of the legislation ended. As we explained earlier, single gender schools throughout the country were being challenged on grounds that they were violating Title IX imperatives. The California single gender schools were afraid they would experience similar attacks. Administrators were concerned they were "getting into an area that is a little bit cloudy from a legal perspective" and were thus reluctant to support continued implementation.

Although the schools made every effort to maintain equal funding, resources and opportunities for boys and girls, there were some real practical constraints that undermined their efforts and left them vulnerable to legal action. As we explained, maintaining equal enrollments of boys and girls demanded by the state of the single gender schools caused serious concern for all the administrators in this study. In some cases, administrators suggested that they might be interested in continuing one of the academies (boys or girls, whichever seemed to be "working" in a particular context), but they knew that offering single sex education to only one gender was not constitutionally defensible.

It seems that one solution in avoiding legal challenges is by maintaining a low profile, as we described with the all-girls public high school in the eastern U.S. Similarly, a California high school (non-grant funded) that offers single gender classes to boys and girls in its special education program has also attempted to keep their program under

wraps. By not calling attention to themselves or their agenda, they are not threatened by closure from district administrators who are genuinely concerned about legal issues. They have been able to operate without attention in part by the fact that they are nestled in a coeducational setting. They are less obvious than whole schools that are designated as single gender, especially those that are recognized to be receiving special state funds. By keeping the single gender arrangement quiet, the school has been able to continue to serve their students in a way they feel is advantageous. The special education teachers had strong beliefs that the single gender classes provided safer, less distracting environments for students in which they could develop maturity and academic and social skills. They worry, however, that over time the district may put an end to their efforts for fear of legal complaints.

In sum, the single gender schools in this study struggled to survive under circumstances that in many ways are symptomatic of the public educational system in general. Their very existence was the result of political actions at the state and district level. They, like their coeducational school counterparts, faced the challenge of educating an at-risk diverse population of students without the resources or commitment from those whose support they needed. Power and politics dictated the course of events that followed. As long as the experiment brought money into the districts, they thrived; without it, they faced competing agendas and demands for accountability. Confronted with high teacher turnover and possible legal challenges, the single gender schools in this study closed their doors. The sustainability of single gender schooling within the public school system depends on the ideological, political, legal and monetary commitment of the power brokers who are in the position to determine their success.

CONCLUSION

In this report we have examined the viability of single gender public schooling by looking at the sociopolitical context, implementation, and organization of the Single Gender Academies pilot program in California. Our research study has offered important information regarding the wisdom of offering single sex schooling in the American public school system as a school choice option, the effects of such an arrangement on gender equity, and its ability to solve the problems of "at risk" students.

One assumption behind single gender legislation was that it would provoke applications from educators interested in single sex education and expand choice. In reality we found that the adoption and implementation of the single gender academies was often motivated by the benefits that could be derived from the generous state grant. When well-meaning educators at the local level in California implemented single gender academies in accordance with the legislation, schools were organized to respond to more pressing issues salient in each local community, such as low achievement, poverty, violence, and geographic isolation. For most administrators, single gender schooling was a vehicle for meeting these needs, or an opportunistic moment, and not an end in itself. Overwhelmingly, educators and policymakers' conceptions of gender, race, and class informed the legislation and its subsequent implementation.

The goals of the single gender academies legislation were to increase the diversity of public educational offerings and at the same time provide equal access. Our findings suggest that neither intention fully panned out. Although Governor Wilson evoked a

discourse of choice as he promoted the single gender schooling legislation, choice was limited from the outset. The ability to respond to the request for proposals was limited by district capacity and the timing of the grant. In the end only six districts received funding. Moreover, while clearly offering a choice to students within the public sector --a choice that is typically reserved for students who attend private schools - in most cases, districts designed their single gender schools for "at risk" students, those who struggled academically, socially and emotionally. In a few instances, efficacious parents who were attracted by the additional resources available to students who attended the single gender academies did all they could to enroll their children.

Often parents were generally more interested in the special resources offered by the academies and less so by their single sex nature, and in fact many academies were underenrolled. In this regard, the California single gender academies may have been a policy in search of a movement, rather than a movement in search of a policy (Wells, 2000). That is, the public interest in the choice of single gender public schooling was not as intense as policymakers might have thought.
We found that when single gender academies tailored curriculum and instruction to meet the different educational needs of boys and girls (as the legislation suggests), they did not, despite their best intentions, offer equal educational opportunity to both boys and girls. Both boys and girls lost out, but in different ways. Rather than finding a setting that was emancipatory, we found that teachers' constructions of gender shaped curriculum, instruction and discipline in ways that often reinforced of gender stereotypes.

Most teachers were unable or unwilling to challenge traditional notions of gender, finding it difficult to move from a biological to a social construction of gender. Teachers typically ignored the salient role that classroom interaction can play in shaping and reshaping students' perceptions of what it means to be a man or a woman. Because boys were perceived to be "talkative and loud" and in need of strict discipline, they were often taught in a harsh and very regimented way. This "academic boot camp" environment, particularly apparent in schools teaching African-American males, compared strikingly to the kinder gentler environment offered the girls who were seen as studious and well behaved. As a result, we found teacher practices catered to the perceived differing needs of boys and girls, resulting in disparities in opportunity.

The single gender academies also did little if anything to challenge students' notions of gender. Students received mixed messages about gender from their teachers. While girls were taught they could do anything they wanted to, they were also applauded for being feminine, concerned about their appearance, looking pretty when boys are around and the importance of wearing makeup. Boys were told they should be able to cry but conversely, they were told that they should be strong and take care of their wives. There were other problems with the arrangement as well. Students experienced some negative effects because they attended single gender schools. They were subjected to negative stereotyping, labeled as homosexual, preppy, or simply, bad kids. We conclude therefore that while the single gender academies were diligent in offering an equal distribution of resources to both the boys and girls, they were not a vehicle for gender equity. The salience of gender equity in the institutional ideology and practice of these schools was ambiguous at best.

Encouragingly, however, we found a few occasions when the single gender schools in this study were successful in expanding opportunities for students and challenging traditional gender roles. At the hands of savvy caring teachers, students learned they

had choices and power to affect their own lives. While such experiences were the exception, their significance points to the effect teachers can have on students' lives when teachers have an emancipatory gender agenda and are in an environment where they can have candid discussions without the presence of the opposite sex. Teachers in this study acknowledged that they were able to talk with their students about dating, marriage and pregnancy and mentor their "at risk" students about the ways in which they could become empowered by their own knowledge, despite their circumstances. These teachers used the single sex classes as an opportunity to impart life lessons. More often it was female teachers teaching girls who challenged traditional gender roles and warned of gender discrimination and bias. Male teachers more often either reinforced or simply did not address such issues.

While single sex schools are also viewed as an opportunity to reduce distractions and provide places that are safe from sexual harassment, our findings suggest that a much more complex set of dynamics exist. Gender is not the sole cause of distractions and in fact we found that teasing and disruptive behavior continued in the single gender classrooms. Students claimed that without the opposite sex as a "buffer," single gender classes exacerbated cattiness and competition among girls and teasing and disruptive behavior among boys. While admittedly harassment from the opposite sex was reduced, when students attended school on the same campus with the opposite sex, harassment continued outside of the classroom.

Lessons learned from single gender private schools do not necessarily generalize to the implementation of single gender public schools. This was most evident as we watched five of the six districts close their schools. They were plagued by a paucity of resources, high teacher and administrator turnover, an absence of a theory for doing single gender education and lack of district support for the gender-based reform. Those most affected by the closure, specifically the students, parents and teachers, had little if any say in affecting the outcome. Districts faced with demands for improved literacy, high stakes accountability and district-wide concerns, coupled by their worries regarding Title IX were quick to terminate their support for single sex schools. Although most district administrators blamed the demise of the schools on the ending of the grant, it was clear that the events that occurred were more about priorities, power, and politics.

Our findings from the single gender experiment in California cause us to pause about whether single gender schooling is a wise move in the public sector, particularly if pursued under the policy framework that existed in California. The single gender pilot study was perhaps not an ideal test case of single gender public education. There were circumstances that limited who had the opportunity to apply for the grant and how it was implemented. Moreover, many of these academies were not what one would typically think of as single gender schools because they were schools within schools. Educators also lacked a strong philosophy for doing single gender schooling unlike their perhaps more ideologically committed private school counterparts. Our analyses lead us to offer the following implications for policy and practice, both in the area of single sex schooling and in school reform more generally.

IMPLICATIONS FOR SINGLE GENDER (AND COEDUCATIONAL) PUBLIC SCHOOLING

- **Policies for single gender public schooling need to be more carefully crafted and need to provide an infrastructure of support.**

  The policy for single gender public schooling in California could have better enabled the successful implementation of single gender public education through expanding the time for educators to prepare applications and providing state-level staff, instructional, and curriculum development assistance to direct educators toward gender equitable practices. Moreover, if such schools are to be used for the education of at-risk students, then state guidance and support is needed in this area as well. Even with such conditions in place, success in single gender education in the public sector cannot be guaranteed, as our study firmly shows that ideologies about gender that permeated the larger society often dictated what occurred in these schools, either in the actions of educators, students, or parents.

- **Findings from educators' implementation of the California single gender schooling pilot program show that the gender "problem" has not been solved.**

  Boys and girls now have supposedly equal opportunities in schools and the achievement gap between girls and boys is narrowing, with girls actually achieving better outcomes than boys in some areas (e.g., Riordan, 1998). Moreover, attention seems to be converging on the problems that boys are experiencing, refocusing efforts away from the unresolved issue of gender inequality. Yet we know that gender is a strong shaping principle of social and power differentiation, with women still on unequal footing in many professions, including teaching and school administration (Apple, 1994; Shakeshaft & Perry, 1995). If schools – much less single gender schools – pursue a gender-blind approach under the guise of equal opportunity, and if policies refocus attention on the plight of boys without a careful critique of equity, the gendered culture of schooling and society is likely to continue.

- **Students and teachers must consciously attempt to dismantle gender inequality.**

  Deliberate efforts must be taken in both single sex and coeducational classrooms to breakdown gender power differentials and gender stereotypes. Most importantly, the goal of gender equity must be accompanied by well-informed practice (Blackmore, 1999). Both single sex and coeducational schooling within the public school system must translate into empowerment and equality for both genders or it does not meet the charge of a democratic nation. As long as inequality persists, be it racial, gender or class, our school system is not serving the needs of all students.

- **Single gender academies need to guard against becoming a new form of tracking or resegregation.**

  Schools that separate students by gender must be vigilant to the negative outcomes that have resulted when students have been separated by race, language, or ability. While separation might lead to a safe or comfortable space for some populations, consideration needs to be given to why separate programs are important for students,

what is gained as a result of their implementation, and what students might lose from not attending a mainstream educational program together.

- **Implementing single gender schools as "schools within a school" (particularly those that are staffed by the same teachers) can unintentionally threaten efforts to ensure gender equity.**

  Educators must be aware that when single gender schools or classes are housed on the same campus as coeducational schools and/or are staffed by the same teachers, students can be subjected to stereotyping, comparisons, interactions with the opposite sex, harassment, and distractions that would normally not occur in self-contained, single gender schools. If girls and boys are separated for instruction but combined for social activities, there is also the risk that girls and boys will see each other only in social or romantic, rather than intellectual terms.

- **Experiments with single gender public schooling need to be driven by a strong theory of gender equitable education. Such schools must be used for emancipation and not oppression.**

  Educators need to have a strong sense of why they are doing single sex schooling, both for girls and for boys. As Kruse (1996, p. 189) states: "Sex segregated education can be used for emancipation or oppression. As a method, it does not guarantee an outcome. The intentions, the understanding of people and their gender, the pedagogical attitudes and practices, are crucial, as in all pedagogical work." Kruse also argues that in addition to promoting self-esteem, gender identity, and enhanced achievement, one of the pedagogical purposes for single sex education should be to "raise the political awareness of anti-sexist issues in light of trying to alter socially constructed gender patterns." (p. 181). Still, questions remain about how long students must participate in single gender schooling to raise awareness and alter gendered patterns.

- **Teachers need access to relevant training and a supportive administration in order to address critical issues facing students' lives, including gender and racial bias, harassment, sexuality, and homophobia.**

  Issues of gender and sexuality are not unique to single sex schools, public or private. Educators across all contexts need to be aware of the intersections of gender, race, class, and sexuality in all students' lives. Thus, educating all students, and in particular "at risk" students, demands more than teaching academics. Educators must be prepared and willing to address students' lived circumstances, as students' moral and social worlds impact the everyday occurrences in the classroom. Single gender settings can allow for more open conversations, but the organizational arrangement alone does not ensure it. As evident from this study, the important relationships that must be established between teacher and student only occur when teachers understand how and why they are integral to the success of students. Public education must put more emphasis on incorporating the agenda of students' personal worlds into professional development, and teachers must view this as an important part of their role.

IMPLICATIONS FOR PUBLIC SCHOOL REFORM

When we examine the findings from our study, we conclude that the single gender schooling initiative in California was much like any other school reform in terms of how it was implemented, what led to its failure, and what would be needed to make it work. Below we discuss some general contributions to knowledge on public school reform:

- **Policy implementation is a co-constructed process**.

  School reform policies do not flow in a unidimensional, unidirectional fashion from the statehouse to the school door. Local educators make educational reform, not just respond to actions imposed upon them. The actions and ideologies of individuals in each setting – the governor's office, the state department of education, the district, the school, and the classroom – all shape the implementation of reform (Datnow, Hubbard, Mehan, 1998; Hall & McGinty, 1997) and therefore should work together in this effort. Quite simply, "schools change reforms as much as reforms change schools" (Cuban 1998, p. 455).

- **Context plays an important role in reform**.

  We agree with Oakes et al. (1999, p. 19)- who argue that: "Reform is much less logical and technically rational. It is much more idiosyncratic--dependent upon the context of local relationships, histories, and opportunities." Socio-political factors interact with cultural beliefs and practices to shape a reform initiative "on the ground." Conditions in local contexts caused educators to modify reform efforts to better suit their needs which lead in some cases to enhanced reforms and in other cases to reforms that are constricted.

- **Resources are essential to initiating and sustaining reform**.

  Most school reforms require substantial funding to implement and to sustain over time. Reform efforts that require a continual financial outlay might find themselves at risk of expiration or at least instability. Yet, the reforms that are most path-breaking or the most comprehensive are often the most expensive. As Fullan (1991) reminds us, school change is resource-hungry.

- **Leadership stability at the school or district level is important for successful reform efforts**.

  Reform efforts become very unstable when there is leadership and teacher turnover (Hargreaves and Fink, 2000). District administrations impact the pace, quality, and form of school reform through their stability or instability of leadership (Bodilly, 1998; Desimone, 2000). It takes three to five years to bring real change, yet we know that the average tenure of a superintendent is about 2 1/2 years. Similarly, when principals and key teachers leave schools, along with them goes the commitment to reform.

- **Educators' ideologies influence how they respond to reform.**

  Educators' and policymakers' ideologies about a number of issues, including gender, ability, race, language, social class, and education -- strongly influence how they implemented reforms. Some educators' socially constructed students' identities in ways that allowed them to see the reform as a way to challenge stereotypes. Conversely, in other cases, belief systems can become impediments to reform.

- **The goal of equity needs to be at the forefront of a reform agenda for it to be realized.**

  Educators must actively confront deep-seated values and cultural beliefs as well as modify institutional practices to achieve educational equity. Yet, this transformation will not happen automatically or naturally. A concerted effort must exist on the part of reformers and school-site educators to place equity at the forefront of a reform agenda and to carry out the needed steps to accomplish social justice goals.

- **Reforms that have an inauthentic beginning almost surely will not be sustained.**

  Inauthentic beginnings for reform can find their roots in political or practical causes. When the motivations of reform are suspect at the political level, a political change can spell the demise. Moreover, educators often act in entrepreneurial ways in response to funding opportunities connected to school reform. This is quite understandable, but when the goals of the actual reform effort as implemented do not match the intended purpose, reform failure is also more likely.

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